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No. 105.

## THE SWEET GIRL THAT I ADORE.

BY ARNOLD ISLER.

Oh, she is a marvel of beauty!  
So sweet and charmingly fair;  
And in performing her duty,  
Few girls with her can compare;  
Besides she's so kind to her mother,  
And ne'er makes her heart feel sore,  
And blind to the faults of another—  
The sweet girl that I adore.

My little girl is not wealthy,  
But my heart yearns not for gold;  
But she's pure, lovely and healthy,  
Sprightly, yet not over bold;  
She does not grumble and worry,  
Or wish that her dad owned a store;  
But she's e'er contented and merry,  
The sweet girl that I adore.

Oh, she has the loveliest tresses,  
That Nature e'er gave to a girl;  
And though she wears calico dresses,  
She's fairer than diamond or pearl;  
She does not fall into a passion,  
Where'er her heart feels sore;  
Nor is she a slave to fashion,  
The sweet girl that I adore.

Oh, bright be the skies above thee!  
May life's joys ever be thine!  
I love, and will ever love thee,  
Thou little sweetheart of mine!  
My love will prove false to thee, never,  
This side of the Lidian shore;  
I'll cling to thee fondly forever,  
Sweet girl that I adore.

## Madeleine's Marriage: OR, THE HEIR OF BROADHURST.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLET,  
AUTHOR OF "UNDER THE CLOUD."

### CHAPTER I. THE WRECK.

ON the coast of Wales, many years since, was a fishing village composed of straggling houses, partly covering a bluff, under which stretched a low beach, flanked on either side by rugged and sharp-faced cliffs.

A storm had gathered in the chill October afternoon; and while the winds raved and the waves strewn the shore with seaweed and scooped caves in the sands, a flash seaward, and the report of a heavy gun, again and again repeated, announced that a vessel was in danger.

The fishermen, carrying torches, ran to the beach, where they could descry the laboring ship through the driving spray. She had struck on the bar. Cries and contradictory directions were heard on every side. The life-boat was dragged out of its shed under the bank by a dozen brawny arms, and launched with difficulty.

Casks, fragments of timber, and a few bodies of the drowned, were flung on shore. Presently the life-boat, which had been heavily laden, was driven in by a tremendous wave, and dashed upon the sands bottom upward. The men said they could not approach the wreck on account of the beating sails. They had been saved only by their life-belts.

A clear, youthful voice called for help in going out again.

"You shall not go, Lewis!" cried the young man's father.

The youth was nineteen, tall and muscular. He had righted the boat, and was bailing her out, with the aid of two others. "Lewis, you are mad!" exclaimed several voices. But his father did not again forbid his venture. Fastening a life-belt around his waist, and bidding his companions do the same, he pushed off the boat, and climbed into it, shipping the oars.

Once more the light craft shot into the darkness. The young man's shout, as he neared the breaking vessel, came faintly on the wind.

The storm had spent its force, and the parted clouds were driving off. The outline of the ship lying on the bar, could dimly be seen; it was engulfed by a mountain billow, and when that retired the wreck was no longer visible.

There was a mournful silence when a long time had passed without the return of the boat. Then a shout was heard! The boat drifted rapidly past, twenty yards from the line of the beach. There was a rush to save it ere it could be dashed against the rocky cliff.

The boat was recovered. But it was empty! There was a call for men to man the life-boat to go out in search of Lewis Dorant.

Lewis and the two men who had gone with him were clinging to two spars, and buffeting the angry waves.

They touched the sands, and two of them struggled ashore. Young Dorant was behind them, tugging at something he had loosened from the spar. His cry for help brought men to his assistance just in time. He sunk exhausted on the ground, still grasping the clothes of a body he had drawn in with him. It was that of a woman, in whose arms a child was closely clasped.

A rude litter was constructed, and the woman and child were laid upon it. The elder Dorant and his son followed it as it was borne by the fishermen to his house, a low-roofed, stone dwelling on the bluff.

The windows glared with the light of a comfortable fire within, and a tall woman, holding a lamp, stood at the door.

Dorant took his wife's hand, and gave her some directions. She led the way into the house, and motioned the bearers to lay the dripping form on the bed. Then she took from a press some dry clothing for her son, with a warm gown of her own, and blankets for the strangers.

The efforts made to restore the child were presently successful. But life was extinct



"I want mamma!" she pleaded. "Wake up, mamma; speak to your Madeleine!"

in the drowned woman. Wrapped in the dry gown of dark serge, she lay like a broken lily, and her closed teeth would not receive the restorative drops.

Dorant reverently motioned his neighbors to stand back. Taking the little girl in his arms, he bore her to a couch at the other end of the room. The good dame placed some milk to warm at the fire.

One after another, the fishermen went out. Dorant, his wife and son, were left, looking on the face of the drowned mother.

"Cover her face; she must be decently buried," said the elder.

"She was alive when I found her," said Lewis, sighing. "When I told her to hold on to my belt, she bade me save her child, and leave her to perish."

The dame held the cup of milk to the little girl's lips, coaxing her to drink. She sipped a little; then opened her eyes, and fixed them, bewildered, on Mrs. Dorant's face.

"Mamma!" she sobbed.

"Drink this, my child, and go to sleep."

The little girl lifted herself, catching the dame's arm, and slid to the floor. She seemed about eleven years of age; her features were delicate, her skin white as alabaster; her hair of pale gold, fell in waves, still dripping with the sea-water. She pushed it from her eyes, and looked wildly around her.

Presently she saw the rigid form on the bed. She sprung forward, ran to the bed, and pulled the covering from her mother's face.

"Mamma! Oh, mamma!" she cried, pitifully.

Mrs. Dorant tried to draw her away.

"I want mamma!" she pleaded. "Wake up, mamma; speak to your Madeleine!"

She flung her arms round her mother's neck. As her lips touched the cold cheek, she recoiled with a wild scream, and would have fallen to the floor, had not the dame caught her.

The child lay in a swoon on her breast.

"Take her into the kitchen, Margaret," said her husband.

"Give her to me," said Lewis. And tak-

ing poor Madeleine in his arms, he carried her into the next room, while his mother busied herself in laying out the corpse, and putting away the articles found upon it. These were a double hoop ring of plain gold, evidently a wedding-ring, a rich emerald ring, a necklace of chased gold and a medallion locket; and a ring with a cluster of small diamonds surrounding an opal, with letters engraven on the inside.

The dress was of black lusterless silk, with crape folds; the underclothes were of the finest linen and profusely embroidered.

"She was a widow, I know," said Margaret, as she drew from the pocket a sable-bordered handkerchief. A pocket-book fell out, which Dorant opened. It contained a letter signed "Amy Winchester," and two or three notes in a man's hand with the signature "George." At the dates were the names of different American towns unknown to the worthy couple. In a piece of tissue paper were wrapped eight gold sovereigns, and two five-pound notes of the Bank of England.

Both money and jewelry were carefully put away. The name of "Amy Winchester" on the linen, showed that to be the name of the dead lady.

Mrs. Dorant made haste to put the things out of the little girl's sight. But Lewis came in directly, and said she had fallen asleep.

### CHAPTER II. LITTLE MADELEINE.

THE spoils of the wreck were gathered, and a rude burial was given to the dead thrown on the sands.

A few sailors who had been picked up, reported the lost vessel as "The Ancona," from Boston. There had been four passengers; among them the widowed lady and her little girl. It had been understood that she was going with her child to her relatives in England.

Mr. Morgan, of Dundas rectory, some eight miles distant, was sent for, to bury the drowned lady with the solemnities of the church service.

Some days afterward, the family of Dorant, at their frugal meal, were consulting as to what should be done with the child.

Margaret was sure she would never be contented to stay in the fisherman's humble dwelling. She had frowned at the tin cup in which her milk was served, and said she was used to a silver one. "And she has cried almost as bitterly," continued the dame, "for the loss of her fine clothes as for her mother's death."

"Mother! Mother!" interposed Lewis.

"You do not think she lacks feeling!"

"No, my son; she indulges her feelings too much. She is unhappy, and grieves for things we can not give her."

"If she stays with us," said the old man, "she must live as we do, and learn to like it. I do not see how we are to find her friends, if she has any."

"I was speaking with the minister about that," observed young Dorant.

"And what does he think?"

"He is coming here. I expect him to-day."

The simple, kind-hearted people decided to give the orphan a home if her friends could not be found, and to bear with her childish grief and petulance. While they talked, the little girl came in and took her seat at the table. She wore a frock of pink chintz, cut high in the neck, with long sleeves, made by the not very skillful hands of Mrs. Dorant. Her bright, golden hair, brushed back, hung down behind in braids tied with ribbon. She was pale, and did not speak to any of the three, nor answer when Dorant cheerfully bade her good-morning. Nor did she respond to Margaret's kiss of greeting. When she had taken her bread and milk, Lewis asked her if she would like to go out in the boat with him, or go to gather shells on the sands.

The child replied that she would not go out, because the minister was coming. She remembered him, and had heard him say he might be able to find her uncle.

Lewis assured her that he would find her uncle, if she would only tell his name.

"Would you, Lewis?" asked the little girl.

"Certainly; why not?"

"Because—because—" here the child's lips quivered with a grieved expression, "I thought you would rather keep me here."

"And so we would, darling!" cried the dame, embracing her. "After all, though she thinks the place poor and mean, she does want us to care for her."

The pastor of Dundas rectory—Mr. Morgan—arrived, bringing with him a young lady, whom he presented as his wife's cousin, Miss Ada Meriam. She took Madeleine in her arms with an effusion of tenderness, while the pastor talked with the elder couple. They discussed the possibility of discovering her relatives.

It appeared singular that the child had no recollection of her uncle's name; though she had heard her mother say he was very rich, and lived in splendid style. She had heard described his beautiful house and park, and his horses and dogs; and she had felt sure he would invite them some day to come and visit them in England.

"Had he any children?" asked the clergyman.

"Oh, yes; my cousins Henry and Edward."

"So—a man of wealth, beyond doubt—with heirs, and not interested in her on that score. And did your papa receive letters from your uncle?"

"Oh, no; my uncle did not like papa, and would never write to him. He wrote only once or twice to mamma, when he sent her money."

"He sent her money, then?"

"When she wanted it very much, and asked him. But papa did not like her to take it."

"Quite a clear case," observed the pastor.

"The marriage had been one distasteful to the pride of the rich aristocrat; his sister followed her husband to a strange country, and her mother's family name was not mentioned in her new home. The child never was told who her uncle was; though when widowed, it seems to have been the mother's design to appeal to her brother for aid. How long since the father died?"

"About seven months; so she says," answered Lewis.

"The widow's resolution to claim assistance must have been a sudden one, or she would have told the child more about her relations. One thing is certain; her birth is respectable. She probably belongs to a family of distinction."

"The greater pity, if we can not discover her relations," observed the dame.

The young lady suggested that perhaps Mr. Morell might know them.

Lewis answered that he was well acquainted with Albert Morell, the gentleman's nephew, and would get him to make inquiries.

Here Miss Ada Meriam rose hastily, crossed the room, came close to Lewis, and said:

"Mr. Dorant, you were at Boulogne last summer?"

Lewis looked at her in surprise.

"You were on board a vessel about to sail for England. A young girl dropped her shawl overboard, and reaching after it, fell into the water."

"I remember," answered the young man, smiling.

"You leaped into the water; you seized the girl and held her up; you saved her life?"

"There was a boat lowered—"

"Just in time; your strength was exhausted. You were in a swoon when they sent you ashore. I was that girl; it was my life you saved."

She caught both his hands in hers.

Little Madeleine got down from her seat, approached them, and slid her small hand into that of Lewis, while tears trembled in her blue eyes.

"He brought me out of the water, too, when I was almost drowned," she said.

"Then we both owe him our lives!" cried Ada Meriam. "Yet he does not remember one?"

"How should I?" said young Dorant, "when my only sight of you was under the water! You know my eyes were shut when I fainted!"

"How brave and good you are! Both of us will remember it, will we not, Madeleine?"

"You know the reward in romances," remarked the pastor, mischievously.

"What is that?"

"The young girl whose life is saved by the brave young man generally repays the debt with her hand."

"But that can not be!" answered Ada, coloring prettily. "You know, sir, that I am engaged!"

"Certainly I do. And Mr. Robert Byrne—"

"You need not have told his name!" exclaimed the blushing young lady.

"Yes—you want a safeguard. Robert Byrne is mate of a fine ship," he added to the others, "and is to marry this young lady when he returns from his present voyage."

"And who will reward Mr. Dorant for his gallantry?" cried Ada, trying, with archness, to cover her confusion.

"I do not know, unless it be our little friend here."

Ada stooped and kissed Madeleine.

"Will you take him for your husband, as I can not?" she whispered.

The child looked at her, and then at Lewis, who was smiling at her.

"Promise me that you will," said the elder girl.

"If I find my uncle, and he gives his consent—" began the child.

"You will marry him?"



"I am not old enough."  
"But he will wait for you: will you not, Mr. Dorant?"  
"You must not tease her," he interposed.  
"No—I can not promise," answered Madeleine.  
"Why not?"  
"Because, when I grow to be old enough, I may be ugly; and then he will not like me. I have heard papa say he would not have married an ugly woman."  
"No fear of that; you will be beautiful; and he will love you."  
"How do you know? He does not love me now."  
"Oh, Madeleine! you know better!" cried Lewis.  
"Then, why do you want to send me away?"

His mother clasped the child in her arms. "We do not want to part with you, dear child!" she exclaimed. "We only thought you would be happier with a grand home, and relations and servants to wait on you, and every thing you could wish!"  
"And people to love me?" asked Madeleine.

"We shall always love you, Madeleine," said Lewis, taking her hand. "It is because we love you, that we want to find you friends, and place you among your kindred. We hope you will never forget us, even if we have to part with you."

The conversation was resumed between the elders. The pastor advised the insertion of an advertisement in the prominent newspapers, requesting the relatives of Madeleine Winchester to claim her. This was done; the money found on the person of the drowned lady being appropriated to pay for the advertisements.

Mr. Morgan had established a school two miles and a half distant, on the coast road; and every week he came to inspect it. He offered to furnish Madeleine with books, and to superintend her studies. This arrangement was decided on. Miss Meriam promised to come again, and the visitors departed.

The advertisements were inserted, but brought no answers except from persons who evidently thought some pecuniary profit was to be made out of the claim of relationship. Their stories proved them of no kin to the child.

So months passed, and the little girl became reconciled to the humble home of her foster-parents. She assisted the dame in light labors when not occupied with her studies. The pastor, when he came to examine her, was astonished at her rapid progress in learning. Lewis studied with her in the evening, anxious to make up for the defects of his early learning.

Late in the following morning an incident occurred which had an influence on Madeleine's destinies.

She had left the school-room early, walking homeward along the road, which ran along the summit of a rocky precipice, washed by the sea at full tide. On the other side was a stone wall, topped with a thick hedge.

Madeleine had grown taller; her cheeks were flushed with exercise, and her bright hair strayed in ringlets over her neck. As she ascended a hill, she suddenly paused, her gaze riveted on a distant object ahead.

It was a light carriage, in which two men were seated. One was striving with all his might to control the horses, which had taken fright, and were plunging violently forward.

In a moment Madeleine had dropped her basket of books, turned and fled with the speed of a startled fawn over the road she had traversed. She had noticed as she passed that a gate was closed on the very brow of the precipice; closed by some careless person; for all the gates marking the boundary of the lands usually stood open for the convenience of passengers, although the road was not often used.

If the maddened horses dragging the carriage should come suddenly upon the closed gate!

The walk and hedge were close on the other side; there was no way to turn out. There was not space on the edge of the cliff outside for a carriage to pass, though room for a foot-path. The horses, swerving from the gate, would inevitably be dashed down the precipice!

Swift as a deer sped the flying girl. Her bonnet and shawl fell off; her locks floated like a cloud in the wind; her arms waved as if they were wings. She heard the tramp of the terrified animals, and the rattle of the carriage behind her.

Nearer—nearer—every moment!

Nearer! The maddened steeds were close to her; she almost felt their hot breath; she heard the cry from the carriage, warning her to turn out of the way or she would be trampled on! She had no thought of herself.

One moment more, and the inmates of the carriage caught sight of the closed gate. On one side the wall, on the other the precipice and the sea!

The next instant, the brave girl had thrown herself with all her strength against the gate, pulling out the iron pin as she did so. The gate swung back, the girl clinging to it, just in time!

As the horses dashed wildly through, Madeleine was thrown down. The wheels of the carriage rolled over her dress, tearing it, and grazing her limbs, as she lay helpless on one side of the road.

But her generous effort had succeeded! the horses plunged on, and ran a mile further before they could be stopped. Then the master, alighting unhurt, bade his servant unharness the panting steeds, and ride one back to see what had become of his young preserver.

She was sitting by the roadside, her dress in tatters; but she was uninjured except a few slight bruises. With some difficulty the man persuaded her to let him carry her home.

Exhausted by fatigue and excitement, she was trembling violently, and was afraid of the horse. But the man assured her there was no danger, and when he had lifted her up before him, set off on a swift gallop.

Mrs. Dorant was astonished when she saw her foster-child brought back in such a manner, and ran out to meet her in trepidation. Madeleine, laughing at her fears, and the man hurriedly explained, saying he must hasten back to the relief of his master, Mr. MORELL.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE UNCLE AND HIS NIECE.

THE scene is transferred to the most beautiful part of Sussex. The time is later by some years.

The country seats in this lovely section are rich in cultivation, and art vies with na-

ture in setting forth the beauty of the scenery. Each farm-house is a picture; every park shows the taste, as well as the wealth, of the proprietor.

The estate called "Broadhurst" was not large, but valuable for its fine timber and an extensive park. The house was of stone, massive, and rambling in architecture. It could be said to belong to no particular style of building; but age had made its walls venerable, and the central building and one wing were thickly covered with ivy. The lawn and shrubbery in front and on either side were kept in perfect order. Behind was a stately grove of ancestral oaks. The grounds in front were much shaded, and at the foot of a slope might be seen a bright lakelet. Beyond the park, green fields stretched to the limit of the range of vision.

A pretty lodge, overgrown with ivy, and nestled in shrubbery, stood near the gate.

It was high sunset, and an old man, whose duty it was to keep the entrance, stood at the door shading his eyes with his hand, in manifest expectation of an arrival. The sun had disappeared behind the range of wooded hills to the west, when the distant sound of carriage-wheels was heard approaching.

The lodge-keeper descended and opened the gate.

The carriage was an open one, and held two persons—one a thin, middle-aged man, the other a young one. They did not stop to make inquiries, as the old man seemed to expect, but drove rapidly up the winding avenue to the house.

At the door the carriage stopped, the young man sprang out, and courteously offered to assist the other. The whole aspect of the first showed him accustomed to the place, and an inmate of the house. He spoke to the servants who came up, calling them by name, and asked for their master. Then he escorted his companion up the marble steps into the house, and ushered him into the library.

The room was large and lofty, and gloomy within, in its appointments. The massive paneling of dark, polished oak; the range of cases filled with books; the old paintings on the walls; the heavy crimson window-curtains; the somber colors of the rich carpet; the chairs and tables of solid oak, had nothing to promote cheerfulness. A broad, long table, covered with green baize and laden with books, papers and writing implements, stood in the center, and a leather arm-chair was drawn close to one end, and that was lighted by the rays from a tall reading-lamp. From this chair a tall, but feeble-looking man had just risen to receive the new-comers.

"Mr. Clermont," said the younger of them, "this is the physician—Dr. Merle, from Brighton. Dr. Merle—Mr. Clermont."

The master of the house welcomed the stranger and requested him to be seated. "You are aware," he said, after a moment's silence, "of my trouble?"

"Your son's illness?" replied the stranger. "Mr. Marritt, here, gave me an outline of the case. He was injured, I believe, at the time of the accident."

"When my eldest son was killed," replied Clermont, "that happened nearly two years since. They had been inspecting some machinery; Henry—the oldest—had been greatly interested in the scientific plan elaborated; he dabbled in such things himself. There was a terrible accident; I can not enter into the particulars."

He wiped the drops from his forehead.

"Do not, do not," said the physician, deprecatingly; "I have heard the particulars." "The elder brother was killed instantly; the younger one received injuries, but seemed to recover from them, till—some months since—"

"I understand; an affection of the brain has supervened."

"I should like you to see him."

Mr. Clermont rang the bell, and directed the servant to call the housekeeper. Then he sat down and answered the other questions put to him by the doctor.

The housekeeper preceded the two men up-stairs to the patient's room.

It was one of the most cheerful in the house. The hangings were of rose-colored silk; the ceiling painted in panels with bouquets; the drapery of the bed was white, looped back with pink ribbons, and various statues and objects of vertu stood on the marble tables. A large painting in rich colors hung opposite the foot of the bed. The chairs and sofas were covered with embroidered velvet. Close to the bed was a small marble stand, on which were a few vials and other paraphernalia of a sick room.

The patient was sitting up in bed, supported by a frame covered with pillows. He had some beads and square bits of glass of different colors before him, which he was arranging and rearranging. He did not look up when his father came to the bedside, nor notice the visitor in any way.

The physician examined him, and asked many questions as to the course of treatment pursued by the family surgeon who attended him.

The young man was sadly emaciated. His head was much enlarged; his eyes, though clear and bright, seemed to have lost much of their sensibility to light. He continued to string the beads, and arrange the glass—smiling occasionally, but answering rationally the questions put to him.

When the examination was concluded, Mr. Clermont led the way to the drawing-room, where the two conversed in low tones, till the butler announced dinner.

The dining-room was a model of what an apartment appropriated to the pleasures of the table should be. The pictures with which it was profusely decorated were of subjects of the chase, game, etc.; the statues in the corners were of bacchantes; the furniture was light and elegant; the sideboard was loaded with silver, scoured to dazzling brightness. The table was set with only three covers; but the quantity of rich plate upon it, and the variety of dishes served, betokened a prodigious taste for luxury. Never had Dr. Merle, in the houses of the nobility at Brighton, tasted choicer wines. His respect for his host was evidently increased. Mr. Clermont was a gentleman in the most refined sense; his dinners showed it.

But the host seemed to enjoy nothing. Scrupulously attentive to his guest, he was abstemious himself. No wonder, with a pre-occupied mind. His long anxieties had preyed on his health. His pale, sallow face, and feeble gait, plainly showed the corroding effect of sorrow.

The third person at table we may as well describe here, as he will occupy some space in our story. Jasper Marritt had for some years been

the confidential secretary of Mr. Clermont. He was a distant relative; a cousin twice removed, but whose claim to kindred was fully recognized. Mr. Clermont, on this account, gave him his confidence the more unreservedly. He was apparently not over twenty-eight, tall and lithe of limb, sinewy and active enough to show that in the full maturity of physical strength he would be a powerful man. His step was quick, elastic, and often noiseless. His face was an uncommon one. The outline was sharp, almost severe; the nose too much curved for beauty; the high cheek-bones, and narrow, though high forehead, adding to the irregularity that prevented his being called handsome. His eyes were of the violet gray which exhibits so great a capacity for expression. They were small, deep-set, and fringed with dark lashes of unusual length. When he smiled, they were almost closed. His lips were thin, molded into feminine beauty and delicacy of form; and the smile was wonderfully captivating. Its strange sweetness was at variance with the cold and often cruel expression in the eyes, so much so that the idea of a singular anomaly in the character took possession of the beholder. The first impression produced by looking in the face was that of remarkable cleverness, united to entire unscrupulousness; the next was more favorable, especially when the delicate lips parted with a smile, and the eyes were partially shut. Then the magnetic attraction of the face asserted itself, undisturbed by the repulsive effect of the first glance. When the features were in repose, the eyes had a far-away look, as if no attention were paid to the subject of conversation.

But little was said after dinner; Mr. Clermont was grave and silent, though pressing his guest to drink wine. Shortly after they had adjourned to the drawing-room, the physician expressed a wish to see his patient for an hour alone, and he was presently shown to the chamber.

Mr. Clermont and his secretary were left alone.

The drawing-room was magnificently furnished. The sofas and seats were covered with blue satin, with a delicate embroidery of gold. The heavy, sweeping draperies of the windows were to match, with deep golden fringe. The velvet carpet was in one superb pattern, with a wide border of rich work. Paintings and statuary here abounded, as elsewhere in the mansion. At one end of the room was an Indian cabinet of costly workmanship and oriental device; opposite, a curtain of blue damask, looped up with a golden cord, opened into the music-room. Vases of fresh flowers stood on tables near the windows, though coals were alight in the grate. There was splendor enough for an assemblage of beauty and the noblest in the land.

As Marritt sat there, he remembered the time when those rooms had been full of lovely women and the aristocracy of the country. Those days were passed. The lady who had presided over the festivities had died a year before her eldest son had been hurried out of the world in a manner so terrible. Now remained only a heart-broken old man, and a son on the verge of idleness.

Clermont was pacing up and down the room. At last he stopped, facing his young secretary.

"Dr. Merle tells me," he said, in a hollow voice, "that Edward's life is in no immediate danger."

The young man bowed and smiled, as if in satisfaction at the intelligence. Then he answered.

"Mr. Aubrey, you know, has always said that. 'I know! I know! He may live—he probably will live—for years to come.'"

"That is a comfort."

"Jasper," said the old gentleman, suddenly, "do you remember my sister? No—how could you! you were at school when she married. But you knew I had a sister?"

"I have heard you speak of her," said the secretary, cautiously.

"Not often; very seldom; I could never have spoken of her more than once or twice, and that hardly to your knowledge. You must have heard of her from the housekeeper."

"Perhaps—"

"It must be so. I was very much displeased at her marriage; some low artist—I forget even his name. She lived with me till she ran away to marry the fellow, and I have never seen her since."

Jasper's face now expressed a decided interest.

"They went to America; to Canada. I suppose he got some sort of a living there; though not much, for Amy wrote to me several times, at intervals of a year or so, and I sent her money in reply, without words. I would have taken her home, if she would have left him."

"And now?"

"I have lost all trace of her. It is so long since I have heard, I believe both she and her husband are dead."

A gleam shot across the secretary's face.

"But they had a child—a daughter; so she wrote me."

The young man listened with breathless interest.

"Marritt, I am going to repose a great trust in you. My son is in no danger of death, and he may recover from this, or he may not, to the full use of his faculties. I may die any day or hour—"

"You—Mr. Clermont?"

"I have known for years," continued the elder man, "that I suffer with an insidious and fatal disease of the heart. Dr. Merle has only confirmed what I knew. It is not likely I shall live long—"

"My dear friend, I hope you are mistaken."

"Do not interrupt me. I have full faith in you, Jasper. My will places my son in your care, if he needs care, when I am gone. You will manage every thing for him. To provide for the event of his death, I have written to a trusty person in Canada to make inquiries about my sister and her child."

"You have written?"

"It was a private matter, and I did not wish Amy—her married name is Winchester, I remember! to know about it. If her daughter is living, in case of Edward's death, she will inherit my property."

"You are generous, indeed!"

"But on one condition: that she marries one of my family, no matter how distant a relative. I should like her to marry my son."

"But her education—her habits would be so different from his."

"My sister would take care of that; she is a lady, or was one. The girl must be well on in her teens now, I should think."

My correspondent was on the trace when he last wrote."

"And if the girl be living and her parents dead—?"

"I want her brought to my house, the sooner the better."

"The parents too, if they survive."

"No—not the man. My sister, if she will leave him; if not, the girl only. You must see to this, Jasper, if I should die."

"I will try to fulfill your wishes, sir, in every thing."

The conversation continued some time longer. Mr. Clermont adding minute directions, which Marritt promised to commit to writing, and fully to observe.

Later the same evening, after Mr. Clermont and his guest had retired, the secretary went softly down-stairs, and let himself out by the kitchen door. He took his way past the stables, toward an isolated building near the spring, formerly used as a dairy-house, now tenanted by a retired groom, who hung on as an occasional servant, and had the freedom of the grounds.

A light was burning in the upper part of the small house. Marritt opened the door, and closed it after him; went noiselessly up the narrow stairs, and tapped at the door of the chamber, which was bolted. The man within undid the bolt, nodded a welcome, and placed a chair for his visitor.

The chamber was full of the fumes of tobacco, from a pipe the ex-groom had been smoking. With an exclamation of disgust—for the secretary had no small vices—he crossed to the window, and flung the sash up. The fresh air dispersed the smoke, and then he sat down, having lowered the window.

"The time is coming, Hugh," he said, "when you can prove your fidelity to our agreement."

"The sooner the better, Mr. Jasper," returned the ex-groom.

"The doctor I brought from Brighton to see your young master, has pronounced sentence of death upon the old one."

"Sentence of death!"

"I heard what he said. It is nearer than Mr. Clermont thinks. And I am left guardian, Hugh, to the young heir!"

He could not have a better one; leastwise, the property couldn't, said the man, chuckling.

"Listen, Hugh! There is another heir—"

"Another!" The groom dusted the ashes from his pipe, and laid it upon the shelf.

"The old man's niece! If she turns up—what will become of our game?"

"How is she the heir?"

"Why, in case of Edward's death! You are stupid to-night."

"But the doctor says the young master will not die!"

"He may and he may not."

"Not much matter which. Once the property is in your hands, Mr. Jasper—"

"Pshaw! I am not going to run away with it! Nobody can hold peaceable possession unless the law is willing. I do not want to earn the character of a knave—"

"No, no! Mr. Jasper! You leave the knave's tricks to me. You would be a country gentleman—a squire of degree—a landed proprietor—"

"And you want the thousand pounds—"

"Which you promised me in case I could help you to possession. But I see no way of doing it, except—except—"

"There is no more of that, Hugh! There is a better way. Find me out the niece, and I will marry her."

"Marry the heiress!"

"Why not? She is to have every thing, only in case she marries one of the family. And I am of the blood, you know."

"An easy way to get a fortune! Where am I to look for the girl?"

"She was in Canada; but we shall hear news of her. Mr. Clermont has an agent on her trace."

"Then you are saved the trouble?"

"No. I want to secure her first. If necessary, you must go to Canada."

"It is a bit of a journey, Mr. M—"

"You have been a detective her many years you can not fail to trace her."

Her mother—Mr. Clermont's sister, run away from his house to marry a beggarly artist of the name of Winchester."

"Winchester?"

"They went to Canada, but kept up a communication with your master, at long intervals—he sending money to the lady. They have been silent a long while, and he thinks they are dead."

"Humph!"

"I have a shrewd guess that they are tired of the wilds, where the arts do not flourish, and have returned to England."

"Then they would report themselves here!"

"No—they would be too proud to beg charity. They have settled down somewhere, and may be found. You have the means of making inquiries in Liverpool and other seaport towns. You must employ agents, or go yourself."

"If you want the inquiry secret—I had better go."

"Then you shall—to Liverpool. You can hear there of all American vessels in which they would be likely to take passage. I have a capital pretext for your absence during a month; and Mr. Clermont will not miss you. You can set off to-morrow. I will furnish you with a letter of instructions."

"Do not discover yourself; but let me know. All depends on secrecy and dispatch."

"I shall be ready to start, sir."

"I will bring you the money by dawn. Take a good rest now; for you will have a hard journey to-morrow. Good-night!"

And the two conspirators separated.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### CHANGES OF FORTUNE.

MR. MORELL'S house stood some twenty miles from the fishing village mentioned in our first chapter. A pretty bay window of the library opened on a pretty lawn, and was shaded by a large crab-tree. The room was sumptuously furnished. Besides a splendid collection of books and pictures, with a table and writing-desk, there was a painter's easel, containing the portrait of a lady. Drawing implements were scattered here and there. On one side of the room was a door slightly ajar, leading to a staircase.

The door leading into the hall was opened suddenly, and a lady of about twenty-five years of age, with a profusion of brown curls, in an elegant traveling-dress, came in, followed by a young man in very plain attire. She moved forward quickly, and drew the light covering from the picture on the easel.

"Look at my portrait; it is just finished!" she said. "Has she not a master's touch?"

The young man made no answer, but turned aside, his eyes dreamily fixed on another picture, hung on the wall.

"She might make money out of her talent for painting," continued the sprightly lady; "but she will not need it."

A sigh escaped the listener.

"Old Morell will of course make her his heiress, now he has quarreled with his nephew. She will be very rich."

"Rich!" echoed her companion, speaking as if forced to say something. "Rich and gifted!"

The lady of the clustering curls turned toward him and pointed her parasol playfully, whispering, "I know how it is, sir. I always fancied it would be so."

The young man started, and flushed crimson. Then he answered with an effort:

"You are joking, Mrs. Byrne. You know how very poor I am."

"But Madeleine will be rich!"

"And—and—you must think very meanly of me, Mrs. Byrne!"

"Oh, the pride of men! You are not going? Do you not want to see Miss Winchester?"

"Not now, madam," and, bowing coldly, he moved to the door.

"Dorant!"

"Madam?"

"What a fool you are, Dorant!"

"Thanks, madam. Good-morning."

The next moment he had passed out of the hall-door.

"Poor Lewis! how odd he has grown!"

was the lady's comment, as she passed the whitest of hands over her portrait, to ascertain if it were dry. "Very odd! But I can not wonder at it! In love, and too proud to confess it, because he is poor! Yet for how many years has he toiled for Madeleine's support! She can not have forgotten him already!"

Here a maid entered.

"Will you walk into the drawing-room, madam?" she said.

The lady smiled assent, and they went out together.

Mr. Morell had at once offered to adopt the young girl who had saved his life. But Madeleine could not be prevailed on to leave her foster-mother, between whom and herself the tenderest affection subsisted.

She would have no other home, and the rich man could only show his gratitude by sending her suitable dresses, and providing for her education as a lady. Madeleine spent some time at a select-school in a town not far distant, where she had the best instruction in music, drawing, and other accomplishments. She had a genius for drawing, inherited from her father; and she often playfully told Mrs. Dorant she would support her by becoming a skillful artist.

Lewis took several voyages, and all he could make was devoted to the support of his parents and the young girl. Thus years passed, till the death of Mrs. Dorant.

Then Mr. Morell, who had been a frequent visitor, entreated Madeleine to come and live in his home; and both Lewis and his father urged her to consent. It was not right, they said, that her youth should be wasted in attendance on a feeble old man, when she could have the advantages of society and a position of independence. A deep desire for this prompted her to yield.

Albert Morell had been banished from his uncle's house. A course of profligate conduct had been crowned by forgery; the old man suppressed the evidence, but he could not forgive the guilt. He pleaded his loneliness, for his housekeeper, an aged relative, was no companion for him. Thus it happened that Madeleine was in a new home.

She had not been formally adopted as a daughter; but she enjoyed the privileges of one; she had leisure for painting, and she went as often as she pleased in the carriage to see her early protector by the sea. To please Mr



to see him much noticed by the country people.

"And is he not?"

"He is very rarely seen. No visitors are admitted; he never goes out. People wonder what is the matter."

"He is ill, perhaps."

"That may be; but no medical man is in attendance. All the business is managed by the house steward, and the orders all come from Mr. Marlitt, a cousin of Mr. Clermont, who was appointed by the will guardian to the unhappy young man."

"Why is he unhappy?"

"The story goes that his malady came back after the sudden death of his father, and that he is now a madman or an idiot."

"How very sad!"

"If his guardian, the former secretary of Mr. Clermont, were not so agreeable and such a gentleman in his deportment, it might be thought that he imprisoned the young heir, to have the management of the property. But he is universally respected."

"It is well for the poor young man that he has fallen into such hands."

"No, I can not help suspecting that there is something wrong! I have heard that strange sounds have been heard at night from the eastern wing of the mansion, and that a light is burning there at all hours. I have once or twice gone into the grounds for a walk, and passed by that wing."

"Did you see any thing?"

"Once I saw the window open, and a face looking out; but I could not see the features distinctly."

"You do not think he is kept a prisoner?"

"No; how could he be, with a house full of servants? But he must be strangely out of health, or out of his mind."

"I would not go there again, Ada."

"I will tell you what I would do, Madeleine, if I were a young girl like you!"

"What, pray?"

"I would find out the secret; I would rescue the young man and marry him!"

"Ada!"

"I can not think him fairly dealt by! His guardian uses his fortune according to his pleasure."

"But it can not be a pleasure to him to be jailed to an imprisoned lunatic."

"I am bent on finding out, Madeleine, why he is kept in such privacy. I will go there again. You shall go with me, when you come to stay with me; will you not?"

"Do you want me to take the crazed young man for a husband?"

"Oh, no! I know somebody who would object to that. You, too, Madeleine!"

Before the lively lady could remark upon the color that rose to the girl's cheek, there was a knock at the door, and Sidney, the housemaid, came to say that a gentleman was in the library, who begged to see Mrs. Winchester.

"I know who it is, Madeleine," said Mrs. Byrne, archly. "He has come to bid you farewell. Go and see him; I will find Mr. Morell in the garden."

And playfully tapping her friend's cheek, Mrs. Byrne passed out of the door opening into the flower-garden.

Madeleine descended to the library. She uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy, when both her hands were taken by her visitor.

"You are pale and sad, Lewis!" she said, looking earnestly at him. "Has any thing happened? Your father—"

"He is well as usual, Madeleine. His old ailment, poverty, is his only trouble. And I must leave him."

"Why must you, Lewis?" The girl's eyes were filled with tears.

"You know I can find nothing to do at home, and in Antwerp I can have a situation, and support my father. I came to bid you adieu, and to return this."

He offered her a small box. She opened it.

"What is this? My necklace and locket! Oh, Lewis! this I left for your father."

"We can not part with it, Madeleine. One day you may need it to prove your identity, if you should ever discover—"

"Discover my relations! I have given up all hope of that. Lewis, I loved your mother as my own. Do not refuse this trifle."

"Nay, Madeleine, I shall not need it."

"You may; and I can not bear to do nothing for those who saved and sheltered me. For years your home was mine, and now I enjoy luxury and can not share it with you. It is a bitter thought that I must be so ungrateful."

"Madeleine, you have been the light of our house. It is I—*who owe you gratitude.*"

The young man's face was crimson, and he spoke in a stifled voice. The girl laid her soft, white hand in his.

"Lewis," she began, tenderly.

"Do not do so—Miss Winchester—I beg of you—"

"Miss Winchester?"

"Forgive me, Madeleine. Sometimes I feel as if I should go mad! I must not stay here—or I shall!"

"Lewis, I will go and stay with your father."

"No—you shall not. Mr. Morell would never consent."

"What is he to me compared with you all?"

A gleam of wild joy shot across the young man's face for an instant, but it was swallowed up in gloom.

"You must not speak so; I can not bear it," he said in a low tone of deep emotion.

"We are grateful—"

"Do not use that word, Lewis, or I shall think you despise me!" cried the girl, bursting into tears.

"Then I will not. Only listen to me. Let the past remain; it is a sweet recollection. Think of us kindly, dear, dear Madeleine. I rejoice in your good fortune; far be it from me to meddle with it. This gift of yours—so generous it was of you to offer us your all—I can not rob you of. But you can do me a favor."

The weeping girl looked up.

"I will go to Mr. Morell!" she cried, impetuously. "He is very rich. Only on Monday his agent brought him a large sum, and he put it in my charge for safe-keeping. I locked it up in that desk; here is the key."

"I can not ask a loan of Mr. Morell," replied young Dorant.

"But I will—I will beg it of him; I will tell him it is to pay rent for my foster-father—to keep him till you can send supplies."

Neither of the two heard the door leading from the library into the reception-parlor softly opened; neither saw the bright face of Mrs. Byrne. The sound of a man's voice stopped her, and she did not advance.

"No—Madeleine—you must not do that," answered Dorant. "And I can not take

your necklace; even if pawned, I could not raise on it the sum I need—a hundred pounds. I have written to Mr. Long: he owes me money, and promised to send it after me. I bade him send it to you; he lives near here. I will wait at the railway station till the last moment. When it comes, will you send it instantly?"

"I will."

"I know I can depend on you, Madeleine. If Mr. Long sends me what I asked, I can do very well. It will keep my father till I can come back to see him."

"But if he does not send it?"

"Then—I must hope for the best. They are coming in. I must not stay. Heaven bless you—dear Madeleine."

"I will send you Mr. Long's letter the moment it comes."

"I will wait for it. Good-by, now, dearest friend!"

He caught her hand, pressed it hastily to his lips, and was gone the next moment.

Madeleine stood like a statue. The life seemed to have gone out of her frame.

The parlor door opened, and Mrs. Byrne came in. She came close up to the girl, and took her hand.

It was the hand on which Madeleine yet felt the young man's burning kiss. She snatched it away.

"Remember your promise!" said the arch visitor.

"What promise?"

"Have you forgotten it? To spend a month with me in November. I shall be disappointed if you do not stay all winter."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Byrne."

"How often I have told you to call me Ada!"

"Ada, then."

"Mr. Morell has no claim on all your society. And you must not be a genius, wedded to your art. A girl should see the world before she marries."

"I have no thought of marrying," said the poor girl, at a loss for something to say, while her thoughts were elsewhere.

"Yet I know you have dreamed of love—though you will not confess it! And I know who worships you at such a humble distance."

A servant came in with a letter on a silver tray, which he presented to Miss Winchester.

"Mr. Long," said the man, "sailed this morning for America. His clerk sent back Mr. Dorant's letter."

Madeleine grew very pale. "That hope has failed," was the thought that rushed through her brain. "Send Alice to me," she said to the servant, who retired immediately.

Mrs. Byrne was looking at the pictures. Glancing at her, Madeleine sat down, and without taking time to write, put the returned letter into another envelope, which she sealed and directed to Lewis Dorant.

Mrs. Byrne watched her furtively. At length, moved by a sudden impulse, she came close to her.

"Madeleine, is not this something in which I can serve you?"

For one moment the young girl hesitated. But she did not feel herself at liberty to disclose the need of those who were—so to say—her own, to a comparative stranger. She felt her own pride involved. She still hoped for aid from Mr. Morell. So, with reserve, she turned away, murmuring the words, but assuring Mrs. Byrne there was nothing in which she could aid her. She was very grateful, nevertheless.

"Do not talk of being grateful!" exclaimed the young matron, impatiently. "I will teach you better."

Alice came in. Madeleine bade her take the letter to the railway station, and give it to Mr. Dorant's hands.

The voice of Mr. Morell was heard from the garden, calling Madeleine, apparently in haste. Begging Ada to excuse her, she ran out to answer the call. Mrs. Byrne bade her go quickly, and she would follow her.

The moment she had closed the door, the lady turned to Alice, and caressingly entreated her to run up into the drawing-room and bring her gloves.

No sooner had Alice gone than Ada took up the letter that lay on the table. A whirl of thoughts went through her head.

When Alice came back from the drawing-room, which she had scoured in vain for the missing gloves, she found Mrs. Byrne standing by the window, her heart throbbing like a frightened bird's. She begged pardon for giving the maid so much trouble, when she had the gloves all the time in the pocket of her basque. She looked at Alice as she took up the letter and went to fulfill the directions of her young mistress. She ran to the window to see her go out of the gate. She clapped her little white hands, and laughed softly to herself. Her eyes were sparkling, when Madeleine and Mr. Morell came in.

Her carriage was announced, the portrait was taken out, and the farewells were exchanged. Mrs. Byrne was going to her aunt's, and not to her distant home till November, her husband being at sea again. She embraced her friend cordially, and the two went out to see her into her carriage.

(To be continued.)

**Laura's Peril:**

OR,

**THE WIFE'S VICTORY.**

A STORY OF LOVE, FOLLY, AND REPENTANCE.

BY BARTLEY T. CAMPBELL.

AUTHOR OF "IN THE WEB," "OUT IN THE WORLD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RUNNING AWAY.

ELTON ROBSART had been buried three days, and Laura was just recovering from the shock consequent on his sudden demise. She was very pale, and exhausted, indeed, scarce able to be out of bed, but the terror with which Sarah Rook's threat filled her, nerved her to make one great effort to escape the toils.

"I can't stay here and wait for the avalanche to crush me. Every hour seems to fly, as if Time was hurrying my doom. No, no, I will go far, far from here, where that woman will never be able to find me."

She called Clowes and Price to the library, and after they had dropped into the seats she pointed out to them, began:

"I'm going away," she said, abruptly; "this place is hateful to me. There is no reason why I should remain now that papa Robsart is dead."

Clowes nodded, and said: "No reason at all."

"And Price, my good man, I will intrust you with the care of this place; you will

take care of it, and if I determine to sell, I'll do so through my attorney, and—and then you can rejoin me."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Price, complimented with the trust reposed in him. "Abroad, ma'am?"

"I don't know whether I'll go abroad or not just yet. I haven't made up my mind quite on that head. I'll keep you advised, however, and Clowes—"

"Yes, milady."

"You are to accompany me. But not at once, for I go to-night and alone."

"Alone, milady?"

"Yes, Clowes, I have a reason for going alone, and you must not question me, or tell anybody in the world that I'm going."

The servants exchanged glances, and Price answered:

"Of course not! It's nobody's business, ma'am."

"Nor do I wish anybody to make it their business. Of all in this house I have chosen you two to share my confidence. You have hitherto obeyed me implicitly in every thing; I have the greatest faith in your discretion."

"We will do whatever your ladyship asks us to do that's right and proper," said Clowes, interrupting her.

"Thank you; you shall not go unrewarded. Here is three months' salary in advance"—she handed each a roll of bills—"and to-morrow, or next day, you will discharge the servants and pay them out of the money you will find in my bureau drawer. Rebecca, whom we brought from England with us, must have her passage paid back if she wants to return to her native land."

"Yes, ma'am," said Price; "any thing else?"

"Nothing. I leave at eight o'clock this evening, and as it is now six, and I have some few preparations to make, the adieu may as well be spoken now."

Clowes began to whimper, but Laura checked her at once. "You mustn't cry, Clowes—the separation will be only of a month's duration at the furthest, and if you show signs of grief, I might as well alarm the whole house, and then, you know, I could not get off at all."

The woman saw the force of this logic at once, and drying her eyes with the corner of her big check apron, she said: "I'll not cry, milady; I'll not cry."

Laura shook hands with them both again and again, and then they left her.

When they had gone she glanced around the apartment, letting her gaze rest longingly, lovingly, on every familiar object.

She felt they were very near and dear to her, with the prospect of an eternal separation so close at hand.

"Robsart Place, you've been my home," she broke out. "When hunted down by the world, when foot-sore and weary; when I could find no rest anywhere, you welcomed me; and when terrors oppressed on all sides, you gave me rest. And now, old home, sweet, kind old friend—she stretched out her arms as if she would embrace every thing about her—there is only one word to be said, and that the saddest of all words: good, kind, sweet old home, farewell. Oh! old home—farewell!"

She pressed her hands to her eyes and dashed away the tears that filled them.

"I mustn't cry," she exclaimed. "I mustn't cry. I have no time for tears or regrets, only time for flight."

She shuddered at the idea of facing alone the wide, wide world, and continued: "Everybody seems to be happy and content, while I, God help me! am marked out for misery—for misery—for misery, and bitter, bitter disappointment."

She set her teeth hard together, to prevent herself from wailing out the anguish that was in her heart, and began preparing for exile.

In her own room she shook out her many dresses slowly, folded them neatly, and after wetting them all with tears, laid them away, as she thought, never to see them again.

Oh, the thoughts that were in her mind as she turned away at last. It was quite dark now; she had but an hour in which to reach Sydneytown, if she would be in time to catch the evening boat down the bay.

At first she thought of going up to Baltimore, thence to New York, and then to Europe, and perhaps even to Asia; but, she changed her route after a moment's reflection.

In case of pursuit, that would be the most likely route followed; it seemed the most natural, and there were lines of telegraph and sharp detectives at the depots in all those big cities who would find little difficulty in tracing a woman who traveled alone.

"No, I will go down the bay," she said, "to Norfolk, and I can take shipping from Wilmington or Charleston just as well."

But then, were she to go by the other route, she could easily run up the Hudson and see Mabel a moment, if only by stealth. Ah! it was terrible to deny herself that pleasure, and it was this denial that embittered that love of danger and made it almost unbearable to that brave woman; but she conquered her feelings with a giant effort.

"I will trust to God," she said, "to reunite us again on this side of the grave, and oh, Father of the wretched, hear my petition in this poor respect, if in no other."

She stole out in the garden by a side door, passed down the sloping hillside, keeping the hedge of sweetbrier between her and the house, until at length she reached the red oak.

Here she paused a moment for breath. The bare idea of running away frightened her, and she could not rid herself of the thought that she was being pursued. At one time she was quite sure she heard a step on the other side of the hedge, and again she imagined she caught a glimpse of a bending figure, but, although this made her heart leap in rapid bounds, it did not hinder her feet from flying through the long, drifting grass.

But here, under the red oak, she determined to wait, and make sure that she was not dogged.

Not a sound disturbed the silence; even the leaves which lay thick upon the ground, were too damp with dew to rustle in the slight breeze that was stirring.

Were any person following her they would have had ample time to reach her before she started on again. This fact reassured her, and she sped faster than ever.

She had just reached a little willow copse on the outskirts of Robsart Place, and at the end of the hedge I have alluded to, when a heavy hand was laid upon her arm.

"Running away, eh?" cried a hoarse voice in her ear. "Trying to get off with your neck?"

It was Sarah Rook's voice, and Sarah

Rook's hand, the former full of triumph, the latter heavy, authoritative.

"Mrs. Rook!" gasped Laura.

"Yes, Mrs. Rook, indeed, lady beautiful, and in the nick of time, too."

Laura felt at first as if she must fall at the woman's feet, as she had done before, and beg for mercy, but, remembering how vindictive, how flint-like, she had been on that former occasion, she determined to brave it out to the last. The knowledge that this woman hated, and wished to destroy her, made her strong—desperate.

"Let me pass," she cried, hoarsely. "If you don't it will be worse for you; mind what I say now."

She raised up her little blue-veined fist, like a Hercules in miniature, and Sarah Rook, astonished at this show of spirit, retreated a pace and suffered her to pass.

She had only gained a rod or two, however, when she was caught again; this time in a vice-like grip.

"You needn't try to scare me in that way. You are not going to get off. There is a guard at the boat-landing, and another at the Calvert House. I merely run ahead of the officers to have the pleasure of telling you that you have played your last antic—that my hour of triumph has come at last."

Laura glared at the woman an instant like a lioness at bay; then, with a low cry, darted into the strip of dense timber, which stretched between the path she had been pursuing and the town, and was soon lost in the darkness.

Sarah Rook stood for a moment, as if spellbound; and then taking off her bonnet and carrying it by the strings, started in pursuit.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THEY MEET AGAIN.

ABOUT the same hour in which Laura quitted Robsart Place, Doctor Foster, sitting in his little office in Sydneytown, heard a loud tinkling of the night-bell.

"Wonder who this is?" he said, laying down the book he had been reading. "Mrs. Dodd's little boy for more ipecac, or Tomilson's girl for a fresh supply of pills."

He smiled, for he was in a very good humor with himself and the rest of the world; but, on opening the door, he found that he had been conspicuously incorrect in his surmises; it was neither one nor other of the persons mentioned, but a tall, dark, heavily-bearded man, about whom there was an indistinct something strikingly familiar.

"Doctor Foster, I believe?" said the stranger, with a bow.

"Yes, sir. Won't you step in?"

The stranger said he would, and did.

When he was seated in one of the Doctor's easy-chairs, the light from the lamp on the table fell full upon his face and revealed the features of Cleve Robsart!

Doctor Foster took a seat opposite and began a careful scrutiny of the face before him. This Cleve noticed, and while a smile played about his lips he said:

"You say you are Doctor Foster?"

"Yes, sir."

"Doctor Winfield Scott Foster, eh?"

"Yes, sir," a little curtly.

"Sometimes called W. S. Foster, I presume?"

Cleve said this in a free and easy way that nettled the practitioner, who concluded at once that his visitor was a very important fellow, who had come there for the sole purpose of quizzing his betters, and determining to make short work of him, he arose and said:

"Sometimes called one thing and sometimes another. But, what's your business, please?"

"Oh, my business. Certainly—my business is to find out whether you ever stood next in the class at school, went out fishing with, or tumbled somersaults on the college green with a lazy, worthless vagabond named Cleveland Robsart, some odd thirty years ago?"

Cleve, old boy!" cried the Doctor.

"Winn, my dear, good fellow!"

The two men were locked in each other's arms, blubbering like boys. In fact, they were boys again, for in that glad moment of meeting, time rolled away from their vision its seared record, and only a remote past was visible—a past full of the freshness and fragrance of youth.

After the first gush of welcome had subsided, Doctor Foster said:

"Why, how does this come, that you are walking beneath the glimpses of the moon again, making night hideous, and all that sort of stuff? I thought you were dead and buried, these many years."

"Indeed! who told you so?"

"Well, common report at first, but, afterward, confirmed by your wife."

"My wife! where did you meet her?"

"At Robsart Place, to be sure!"

"How long has she been at Robsart Place?"

"Well, ever since your reputed death."

"There is a long story here, Winn, and I will tell it all after you have answered me a few questions."

"Go on; I have long suspected there was a mystery or romance connected with your wife."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed! But, I'm interrupting you. Go on."

Cleve paused a while, and then asked:

"What do you think of Mabel?"

"Mabel! Laura, you mean?"

"No, I mean Mabel; that is her right name. I never liked it though, and I called her Laura in sport, and she came finally to adopt it. What do you think of her, I say?"

"That she is beautiful as a picture."

"I don't mean that. How has she acted since her arrival here?"

"Well, as far as I can say," replied Doctor Foster, "I have been away a great deal; but this I can say, that she has the reputation of being an angel, and since I have known her she has well deserved the title. Your poor father doted upon her and she on him; in his last illness she never left his bedside."

"His last illness," repeated Cleve. "Can it be that he is dead?"

Doctor Foster told him, then and there, the whole story of Elton's last hours—of the tender, patient care of Laura—of the deep love she had expressed, time and time again, for Cleve.

He was pained when he learned of his father's death, and a silence fell upon the two, which was at length broken by Cleve, who said:

"And so she refused to marry again, and declared her love for me?"

"Yes."

Here their conversation was interrupted by a quick double rap at the front door.

"It's a call, I presume," said the Doctor. "Here, Cleve, step into this room. I'll not keep you waiting long."

In answer to Cleve's look of inquiry, he added: "It's a woman's knock, and a lady's step. You see I'm familiar with such things."

Cleve passed into a room in the rear and closed the door after him.

He had scarcely done so, when, without waiting for the Doctor, the street door was flung open, and Laura burst into the apartment, panting, flushed, excited.

"Oh, Doctor," she broke out, "don't give me up—do not let them take me! I have come here to throw myself upon your mercy. I'm but a poor weak woman, and I'll repent—I have repented. Oh, don't let them take me away! Hide me! have pity!"

She held him fast by the arm and looked appealingly up into his face.

"Be calm," he said, "be calm, and pray tell me what's wrong with you—what's happened?"

"They've come for me; Sarah Rook and the rest," she answered, hurriedly, "and they're going to take me back to California and hang me!"

"Hang you, Mrs. Robsart?" Doctor Foster ejaculated. "You are surely demented. Why should they hang you?"

"They accuse me of killing my husband, Cleve Robsart. I thought you knew."

"No, I don't know," he said, very calmly, "that you did any such thing."

"Then you are not in league with my enemies?"

"No; be calm; sit down. No one shall harm you."

"Yes, but they will—the officers are even now in town after me."

"You say they charge you with killing your husband?"

"Yes; but it was accidental, Doctor; I was trying to save my life; I would sooner have killed myself, for I loved, do still love, my poor dead husband."

She was wringing her hands now.

"Be still, please," he said, laying his hand upon her head; "I have news for you—good news! Your husband is not dead!"

"Not dead?" she repeated, incredulously. "Oh, yes, he's dead; I saw him lying stiff, dead!"

"You thought you did, rather," replied the Doctor. "But he recovered! I heard from him to-day; he is alive and well, and is coming here soon to see you!"







## THE SEASIDE STONE'S STORY.

BY MALCOLM TAYLOR, JR.

Down by the beach at break of morning,  
I strayed one summer day alone,  
Till, with the way I'd walked grown weary,  
I sat me on a smooth, round stone.  
There, rapt in thought, I stood and wondered  
What happenings had there befall;  
When strange I heard the stone soft speaking—  
This sad story it did tell:

"While sportful sea one morn was trying  
To wake his playmate Sand from sleep,  
While romped the Ripples with the Pebbles,  
And I, bed-bound, my post did keep,  
Along the path came straying,  
Linked arm in arm, a loving pair,  
A maid, with ebon eyes and tresses,  
A fisher youth, sunburnt, but fair.

"They sat on my broad back and whispered—  
Ah! I tell my heart will not allow—  
Enough, when too soon came the parting,  
That he gave her his sacred vow:

"His one last voyage to sail that morning,  
And that ere twilight had turned the tide,  
To meet her here, then soon fulfilling  
Her wish to be his wedded bride.

"That night impatient sea grew angry  
That Sand did yet unheeding lie,  
His voice loud vent gave to his passion,  
While swelling heaved his bosom high;  
Athwart him fishers steered their vessels,  
And strove against his wrath to wage,  
Though just his fury more provoking,  
They proved but victims to his rage.

"So when the hopeful maid, at daybreak,  
Came here to prove her lover's pledge,  
She found him to a ship-spar fastened,  
A clammy corpse among the sedge;  
Transfixed she stood, held dumb with horror,  
Her lips gave out no uttered tone,  
But paled her face like his bleached body,  
The sight touched my hard heart of stone.

"Fast joined her tears their kindred briny,  
Till fainting fell she at his side,  
Then soon in flight had fled her spirit,  
And lay she with him Death's pale bride.  
Thus told the stone the tale of woe;  
A lesson does the sad tale lend:  
Seek not to brave an angered passion,  
Nor trust what time or tide shall send.

Tracked to Death:  
OR,  
THE LAST SHOT.

BY CAPT. MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF "HELPLESS HAND," "LONE RANCHER,"  
"SCALP HUNTERS," "WHITE CHIEF," ETC.

## CHAPTER XXV.

A CHOICE OF SONS-IN-LAW.

ABOVE two hundred miles from the mouth of the Red River, in the Louisiana—stands the town of Natchitoches. The name is Indian, and to be pronounced as if written Nak-e-tosh. It is one of the oldest of Southwestern settlements, dating from the earliest attempts at Spanish and French colonization in the Mississippi valley; having at different periods been in possession of both nations—finally falling to the United States, at the transfer of the Louisiana territory, in 1803, by Napoleon Bonaparte.

For eighteen millions of dollars, which would not at the present time purchase a single parish in Louisiana State, Bonaparte, pressed for money, surrendered a tract of territory since transformed into several populous provinces—in fact, most of the North American continent between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains; since it was through the cession of Louisiana that this became claimable by the Government of the United States.

From its early colonization by two distinct branches of the Latin race, and its after-occupation by the comingling of the many nationalities—such as Celtic, Saxon, Scandinavian, and pure German—that compose the American people, the population of Louisiana presents to the ethnologist a study of peculiar interest—the negro and native Indian also forming an element in the amalgamation.

In Natchitoches the traces of these varied types of humanity still exist, with many of the peculiar national customs appertaining to them; though not so distinctly marked as some twenty odd years ago, when it was the scene of some incidents now to be recorded in our story. Then, was it a place fully deserving to be called *peculiar*; that is, when compared with most other American towns—especially those of the north. It was, in fact, only a large village; but as unlike a village on the Susquehanna, Hudson, Merrimac or Connecticut, as a Swiss hamlet to a conglomeration of smoking factories in Massachusetts or Lancashire.

Standing upon a bluff of the Red River's bank, elevated many feet above the water surface, its painted wooden houses, built French fashion, with verandas—there called piazzas—and high-pitched roofs, its trottoirs brick-paved and shaded by trees of almost tropical foliage—conspicuous among them the odoriferous magnolia, and the *Melia Azadirach*, or "Pride of China"—these in places completely arched the streets—the town of Natchitoches offered the aspect of a *rus in urbe*, or *urbs in rure*, whichever way you may take it. The porches and piazzas were entwined with creepers; here and there were stretches of trellis, along which crept the cord-like tendrils of bignonia, aristochia and orchids, their flowers drooping over doorways, shutting out the too bright sunlight from windows, and filling the air with fragrance; while among them whirled the tiny humming-bird, buzzed the large bumble-bee, or from one to another, on silent wing, flitted the butterfly. These were sights you saw at every turning, as you made promenade through the streets of Natchitoches. And there were other sights equally gratifying to the eye. In these same trellised verandas you saw young girls, of graceful mien, elegantly appareled, lounging in the open porches, or, perhaps, peering coyly through the half-closed jalousies, their eyes invariably dark-brown or coal-black, the marble forehead above them surmounted with a chevelure in hue resembling the plumage of the raven. For at that time most of the demoiselles of Natchitoches were descended from the old Latin colonists—the Saxon blonde having scarce yet shown herself in the far South-west.

Meet these same young ladies in the street, it was the custom, and *comme il faut*, to take off your hat, make a bow, and pass on—of course without stopping. Every man who claimed to be a gentleman was expected to do this; and every woman, whether lady or not, if decently dressed, was treated to such deference. On which side or other the privilege might be supposed to lie, it was denied to none. The humblest shop-clerk or artisan—even the dray-driver—might thus make obeisance to the proudest and daintiest damsel who trod the trottoirs of Natchitoches. It gave no right of converse, nor the slightest claim to acquaintanceship. A mere formality of politeness; and to presume carrying it further would not only have been deemed a rudeness, but instantly, and perhaps very seriously, resented.

At the time spoken of, there appeared upon the streets of this polished Southern town two young ladies, to whom hats were taken off with more than the usual alacrity, and bows made with an obsequiousness, as also an elaborate grace, that in many cases spoke of an inner prompting beyond that of mere politeness. The ladies in question were sisters, who had lately arrived in the place, and were staying at its principal hotel. There was no mystery in Natchitoches as to who they were, nor need there be any here. They had not been forty-eight hours in the town before every young "blood" belonging to it, and every planter and planter's son within a circuit of twenty miles, knew them to be the daughters of Colonel Archibald Armstrong—late of Mississippi State, and now en route to establish himself in Texas.

The adverse fortunes of the Mississippi planter soon became equally well known; though, so far as his daughters were concerned, it need not have affected their future. For that matter neither needed to go on to Texas. Before their father had been ten days in Natchitoches, he might have made choice of sons-in-law to the number of at least a dozen, all eligible; among them a member of Congress, two or three of the State Legislature, a couple of officers quartered at the nearest military post, with an assortment of planters, wealthy merchants, and men who made their living by the law.

These suitors were all rejected—all except one. The young planter, by name Louis Dupre, already spoken of as having laid siege to the heart of Jessie Armstrong, had finally stormed, and captured it. The most important question of his life had been asked; the answer of most importance to hers had been given. Vows were exchanged between them.

The younger daughter of Colonel Armstrong had not surrendered unconditionally. Before leaving the old home, she had promised her father she would not forsake him—at least not till they had become settled in their new one. Louis Dupre was told of this promise; and signified his assent to its conditions, in a way that not only met every obstacle, but made things mutually agreeable to himself and his future father-in-law. This he did, by proposing to accompany the latter into Texas, and taking part in the fortunes of the projected settlement. The young planter could yield this point all the more easily, as, in common with many other Louisianians, he had already been turning his eyes toward that splendid territory, late acquired from the weak Government of Mexico.

Dupre had triumphed over many rival aspirants to the affections of Jessie Armstrong, for many there had been.

They were few, however, compared with the host making suit to her who was to be his future sister-in-law. About Helen Armstrong the *jeunesse doree*—the "bloodes"—of Natchitoches were, some of them, half-mad. Within a week after her arrival, two or three duels were fought on her account, fortunately without fatal ending. Not that she had given any one the slightest cause, or one to her champion. She had favored no one with even as much as a smile. On the contrary, she had met all their approaches with a denying indifference; while a cloud of melancholy seemed to brood almost continuously on her brow.

Any one might have perceived that there was a *verme rougeur*—a worm eating at her heart. Too plainly was she suffering from a passion of the past—perhaps unreciprocated.

This did not dismay her Natchitoches admirers; nor hinder them from continuing their adoration. On the contrary, it but deepened it; her cold indifference setting their hot Southern hearts aflame—its very coldness maddening them the more.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

NEWS FROM NATCHITOCHE.

ABOUT ten days had passed over since the arrival of Archibald Armstrong and his people in Natchitoches. The Colonel had been, all the intervening time, engaged in getting up a party for his proposed colonization in Texas. A grand increase of strength had been gained, by the accession of Dupre, the betrothed of his daughter Jessie. The young planter possessed wealth in abundance, plenty of cash in hand, with a numerous belonging of slaves—these of all ages and shades of color, from negro black to quadron white. He also stock and chattels in correspondence.

On the score of decadence, or bankruptcy, there was no necessity for him to break up his Louisiana home. This was only being done for the reasons already assigned—one of them being the condition imposed by his fiancée. On her part it was not caprice nor was it called forth by any frivolous pretext. He knew this, and admired her all the more. He knew she was but keeping that vow made to her father—sacred as any oath—on the day when Ephraim Darke sent word to Archibald Armstrong, in the shape of a legal summons, to turn out from his home, forfeited by the foreclosure of the mortgage. Then, Helen Armstrong had vowed not to forsake her father, but to bear part in his misfortunes, until such time as he, might recover from them; and Jessie, with equal zeal and like filial affection, had joined in the resolve. All this she had made known to her affianced, by way of excusing herself for what might otherwise have appeared a too rigid condition.

She had no need to have given the explanation. To the young Creole, love-entranced, any conditions would have seemed easy; so long as they made him sure that the blonde beauty was to be his. Besides, as we have said, he had already been casting his thoughts toward Texas; inspired by that restlessness peculiar to Western and South-western men, ever impelling them on either southward or toward the setting sun.

Louis Dupre, moreover, had certain other ideas of his own, conceived in a spirit of ambition. He had traveled in Europe—in France; with some of whose noblest families he held relationship—since from one of them was he descended. In Louisiana he was but a planter among planters. In Texas, where land was cheap, he had a dream of establishing himself on a grander scale—at least as regarded territory—in short, of founding a sort of Transatlantic *seigneurie*.

For this Colonel Armstrong would be no weak ally. The late Mississippi planter, though in reduced circumstances, was still held in high estimation. His character commanded respect; and would be sure to draw around him some of those strong, stalwart men of the backwoods, equally apt with ax and rifle, without whom no settle-

ment on the far frontier of Texas would stand a chance of security or success.

For it was to the far frontier they intended going, where land was still sold at Government prices, a dollar and a quarter—five English shillings the acre!

Now that Louis Dupre, a capitalist, had joined it, the organization of the intended colony was easy enough; and Colonel Armstrong had but to superintend the preparations—the purchase of wagons, and their teams of mules or oxen; the engagement of teamsters and other attendants; with examination into the character, and credentials, of families proposing to be fellow-colonists.

In these various duties the Colonel was thrown a good deal upon himself, and his old campaigning experiences. Beyond the fact that his future son-in-law would be sure to provide the sinews of war, he received but slight assistance from him, other than in planning the expedition or carrying out its details.

On his side, the careless Creole was too much engrossed with his golden-haired Jessie to give thought to anything else. She was the sunbeam in which he basked, and out of her presence he felt as if in shadow. Her absence was uncongenial to him as night to the helianthus. Even in her company, if others were present, there was constraint to him, and perhaps also to her. Both liked being alone—*chez eux-mêmes*—as Dupre, speaking his native language, used jestingly to say, when they had the good fortune of being so.

As a consequence of this dual selfishness, Helen Armstrong was often left alone, or with only the company of her mulatto maid, Julia. The girl observed the signs of grief visible on the brow, and weighing down the heart of her young mistress. She could only guess at its cause, though she could do this with a good deal of certainty. Julia had been instructed to read and woven she used to drop those scented billets-doux into the knot-hole of the magnolia she not only knew them to be love-letters, but also knew the name of the man who was expected to take them from their place of deposit.

Of the last letter she had there carried, and what it had led to, her young mistress had not made her acquainted, even of as much as was known to herself. This was only what had been told her by Darke at that ill-starred nocturnal encounter under the shade of the same magnolia.

The tragical incidents that took place afterward were, to the maid as to her mistress, altogether unknown. No news of them had yet reached Natchitoches. Not from these came that deep melancholy, at times bordering on despair, and which the proud lady, stricken in her most sensitive part, endeavored to conceal, even from her whom habit had brought her to regard as one would a wall, a tree, a dumb animal standing by their side.

The mulatto girl, bondswoman though she was, possessed a heart brimful of affection—more especially for her whose waiting-maid she was. She was deeply penetrated by the sorrow she saw weaving its spell upon the life of her young mistress, and threatening to destroy it. Julia had her own sorrows to endure—her lover left behind—she, and only one other, as she supposed, knew where. But she was sustained by the hope he might yet escape from his difficulties and rejoin her, in a land where the dogs of Dick Darke would no longer be able to track him. Whatever might be the fate of the fugitive slave, she was sure of his devoted love for herself, and this was sufficient to keep her from despairing. Therefore had she the strength and spirit to sympathize with her young mistress, whom she saw, day by day, endeavoring to bear up, but evidently sinking.

Julia could not look upon these signs without making an effort to ascertain the true cause. This time had come for knowing it. It was not curiosity, but a nobler sentiment that prompted her.

Inspired by this, she entered the sleeping-chamber of Helen Armstrong when the latter was alone. She carried in her hand that which she believed would give her the clue to her young mistress' melancholy. It might, perhaps, still further deepen it.

"See, Miss Helen!" she said, stepping across the room with an agitated air; "here's a Natchez newspaper just come by the post. It has something in it I'm sure will be news to you."

The young lady stretched forth her hand and caught hold of the newspaper—the *Natchez Gazette*. Her fingers trembled as they closed upon the sheet. At the same time her eyes blazed up with a fierce jealous light. She expected to read among its marriage notices that of Charles Clancy with some Creole girl, whose name was unknown to her. It would be the latest chapter, the culminating point, of his perfidy.

Oh! what a change came over her countenance, when, instead of his marriage, her eye rested upon a heading that proclaimed his death—his murder!

After that, change succeeded change in the glances of her eye, the color of her cheeks, her air, attitude, every thing, as, with palpitating heart and quickly-beating breath, she drank in the details given by the newspaper, set in conspicuous type.

They told of the murder of Charles Clancy; of the arrest of Richard Darke, as the suspected murderer, and of the latter having been taken to the jail of the county town. There was nothing said of what had been done to him after, the paper having gone to press on the day of the arrest.

It contained, however, an account of the death of Clancy's widowed mother, and the consequent excitement throughout the settlement where these stirring events had taken place. Other details were given; and one paragraph of special, of terribly painful interest to Helen Armstrong, holding her spellbound as she read it.

It is scarcely necessary to say that this related to the letter she had herself written, addressed to Charles Clancy, and dropped by Richard Darke.

Its contents were only given in epitome, as a copy of it had not reached the hands of the editor. But even thus they were compromising to her—fearfully humiliating; and she felt it.

The sadness had been enough, without the shame. Both together were beyond bearing; and the proud girl, hitherto sustained by an indignant jealousy, now gave way to a different emotion, dropped the paper upon the floor, and sunk back into her chair, her heart wildly throbbing within her breast—threatening to throb no more.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT WAS DONE TO DICK DARKE?

KNOWING Richard Darke to be a red-handed assassin; knowing of his arrest and transport to a prison; supposing he would

be there securely kept, the reader will perhaps have ceased to think of him while following the fortunes of her for whose sake he had imbrued his hands in blood.

In taking this track the story-teller may perhaps be accused of some slight anachronism; since the events described as having occurred in Natchitoches were subsequent to a scene that must be depicted. The excuse for this apparent transposition of time will be found in the fact that between the two towns, Natchez and Natchitoches, there is a wide distance of waterway, at that time only traversed by a weekly steamboat, not unfrequently failing to reach its destination by days.

The Belle of Natchez had, however, made an unusually quick trip, notwithstanding the tragical stoppage of which the reader has had account. The consequence being that, before Judge Lynch's executioners had reached the prison in which Richard Darke was confined, Colonel Armstrong and his two beautiful daughters were seen upon the streets of Natchitoches. There, taking up the record of their life, it became necessary to continue it beyond the date of an incident in part simultaneous, and partly antecedent. To this incident let us return.

The jail in which Richard Darke had been incarcerated was, as we have said, in the capital town of the county where the murder—if murder it was—had been committed.

In the old civilized countries of Europe the phrase "county town," or "capital of the county," presents an imposing idea. There rises before the fancy an array of streets, generally crooked, with several crossings, a market-house, one or more churches, and, it may be, a cathedral.

A county town, in the Southern or South-western States of America, need not suggest any parallel to this picture. True, some may show streets crossing but never crooked; certainly the churches in more than the Old-World proportion; and indubitably a building of far greater pretension than the English common council-hall or market-house.

This will be the "court-house"—a structure almost peculiar to the American Republic, and forming a conspicuous feature in the national architecture, as it plays an important part in the political life of the country.

I have no space, nor need it be my purpose, to depict an American court-house, or the many uses to which it is put. Sufficient to say that, notwithstanding its great size and pretensions of architecture—sometimes the grandest Grecian, with Corinthian columns and swelling cupola—it often stands in the center of a town that could scarce claim to be called village—a mere collection of weather-boarded houses, subverted by log-cabins, not much better than huts.

The "Hotel" is the only other building in the place that dares look at the court-house and say, "I am a house as well as you."

In point of grand appearance it is justified in making this defiance; for in the smallest American town there is sure to be a "hotel" capable of bedding a hundred guests—if a court-house town two hundred—and dining them at the same table.

The reason for the county towns of the United States being thus often insignificant places is well understood. It is simply the result of a law—a sequence of Republican faith and fairness—that the political center of any district shall be placed in a central situation, territorially, so as to be equally convenient to all. This spot, however convenient for legislators, is often the reverse for the convenience of its inhabitants, their commerce, and generally the industrial development of the place. The consequence is that the county town has a lively, healthy existence, remaining stagnant for a long period of time; its latest and only progress being that which it saw when first founded—when the court dwelling was erected, and the half-score of frame houses, with the hotel, shot up simultaneously. The log-cabins may have been there before.

Just such a county town was that in whose jail Richard Darke was lodged. A court-house in the center, with plenty of open space around it; the hotel standing opposite, a wooden structure, painted white, with an array of windows and green Venetian shutters, numerous as in a spinning factory; twenty or thirty private dwellings, similarly lined; a lively stable, two or three stores, and a straggling suburb of "shanties," surrounded by a rank vegetation of "jimson weeds" and wild pennyroyal. The county jail was a part of the court-house building, situated in a sort of wing projecting from the main structure. There was but one room, or cell, devoted to this special purpose; for in the South-western States of America only a desperate criminal—a man committed for murder or some capital crime—could be shut up in a prison cell. For the detention of debtors, there was another and separate chamber in a remote corner of the court-house.

It was close upon two o'clock A. M. on the morning after Dick Darke had been conveyed to the jail, when the troop of lawmen already treasured was seen riding into the county town by one of the roads that led to it. They were still riding straggled out, and irregularly, to all appearance without leader or any one commanding them. For all that there was an idea or purpose, that seemed to inspire and keep them in a sort of order. At all events, it carried them straight on, and with as much decision as though they were moving by the strictest military discipline.

When close up to the court-house, and opposite the door of the jail, they halted without having received any word of command, though as promptly as if this had been given by the most martinet colonel.

And, on halting, every one of them reaped out of his saddle, threw the bridle-rein over his bow; left the horse to take care of himself; but still keeping to the gun each carried in his hand. Thus they advanced toward the cell in which the accused had been the day before lodged. Three or four who had been a little in advance of the others, and had already arrived at the door, were seen standing by it in attitudes, and with looks, that betokened surprise.

There should have been a jailer to receive them, keeping guard outside. There was none.

All the better, thought some; it would be all the easier to accomplish the purpose on which they had come.

This was to break open the prison door, drag out the incarcerated criminal, and hang him—without further trial, either by judge or by jury.

"Lynch" had already pronounced the sentence; they, his executive officers, were come to carry it into execution.

Strange that the keeper of the jail should not be there! Was he conniving with them, and had withdrawn to give them a good opportunity? Or had he been warned of their approach, and, knowing their desperate design, forsaken his post through fear?

Whatever the reason, he was not there—neither he nor any one representing him. There was nothing to stay them in their intent. Nor was there any authority that could have done this. No power, not even the sheriff with his posse. At that moment it would have been dangerous for any man, or party of men, to have offered obstruction to the stern, determined officers whom Judge Lynch had deputed to carry out his decree.

From him they had the order to take Dick Darke from his prison, and hang him forthwith. No special place was mentioned. The nearest post, or tree-branch—for that matter, the swing sign of the hotel. Anywhere; so long as the criminal was executed.

With this resolve, fixed before their starting from the widow Clancy's cottage, and kept firm by frequent oaths and angry ejaculations as they journeyed along the road, they broke through the door of the prison, and rushed inside the cell, where they knew, or supposed, the malefactor to be confined.

Some prudent ones remained by the door, to prevent his egress. Others entered to seize him.

The cell was dark and silent. When a light had been struck, they saw also that it was empty!

For once the decree of Judge Lynch was made null and void. Richard Darke, a sure murderer, had escaped from the vengeance of angry executioners.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

SPECTERS IN THE STREET.

THE Natchitoches hotel, at which Colonel Armstrong had put up before starting out on his expedition to Texas, was, as a matter of course, the principal one in the place. It would not have been proper for a planter—even a decayed one—to stop at a second-class house.

The first was far from splendid. Compared with one of the princely hostleries of the present day—placed beside that, the princeliest of them all, the "Langham" of London—it would have appeared a hut alongside a palace.

Yet, was it in every way comfortable. What it might lack in interior luxuriousness, as regarded upholstery and the like, was fully compensated by its outside adornings—these not owing aught to the architecture of the house, but all to the vegetation that surrounded and shadowed it. The native magnolia spread its broad laurel-like leaves against the painted wooden walls, while the exotic "Pride of China," rivaling the indigenous tree both in flower and fragrance, let fall its perfumed spikes against the green jalousies; as if, by courting admiration from those who sat within the chambers, into which were wafted its delicious odors.

On a still spring night, with a full moon coursing through southern skies, when the gleam of the fireflies could only be perceived under the darker shadow of the trees, two ladies might have been seen inside the vine-trellised veranda of the quaint, old-fashioned wooden house, which was then the chief hotel of Natchitoches. The ladies in question were both young; and the moonbeams shimmering through the lattice-work showed they were both beautiful—of the two distinct styles, brunette and blonde. To be sure of this, it would be sufficient to say, they were Helen Armstrong and her sister Jessie.

On the faces of the two, thus differing in complexion, still more different was the expression. On Jessie's dimpled cheek danced gladness, joy sparkling in her eyes of grayish blue. For her the past had no sorrows, the future no fears. Her life was in the present—the bright, prosperous present. She dwelt upon the sunny side of the cloud, amidst its silver lining. She was at that moment expecting her lover, Louis. He had promised to come; and, with the instinct of a woman, knowing herself well beloved, she had no fear of his disappointing her.

How different with her sister! Different in every thing, memories of the past, thoughts of the present, forecasts for the future. The dark sheen of her raven hair, the somber shadow on her brow, her wan cheek already beginning to show signs of wasting, the look of settled hopelessness in her eye, once so grandly, imperiously glancing—all this was in contrast with the countenance of her sister.

She had reason for being sad. The disappointments, chagrins, sorrows, that within a short period of time she had been called upon to endure were enough to prostrate the proudest spirit, and bring it to a level with the earth.

And along with all these, thrown into the scale, was the shame of that letter, the contents of which would now be known everywhere.

It was not of the letter she was now thinking. No. Little would she have cared for any humiliation it could have caused, had Charles Clancy been still alive. It was his death that was giving her such bitter grief—that, and a thought of the wrong she had done him. The two combined, made up the agony lacerating her heart—almost rending it in twain.

"Cheer up, Helen! Cheer up, dear sister! Remember that many others have had to suffer the same as you."

"No, never; or, if any have, none to recover from it. How could they? We women, Jessie—true women, like myself and you—have but one love in our life. If we lose the first, the last is not worth keeping. I have lost it, and care not to live an hour longer."

"No, no, no! Do not talk that way; you distress me, sister. Pray do not speak so. Time will change every thing—time and our new life in Texas. Your sadness will depart, and all will be well again. I feel sure of it; there is joy yet in store for you. There is, Helen! there is!"

"Never for me—never!"

The chill, determined rejoinder had its effect. Jessie, awed by it, desisted from her effort at consolation. She saw it was of no use just then, and a delicate instinct told her to take up the task at a more favorable opportunity.

Besides, she was then expecting her own lover, who might make his appearance at any moment.

He had not yet entered the hotel. She knew this, for she had been watching the approaches to it, the street running right and left. At intervals she had been scan-



ning it through the lattice-work, herself unseen, screened by the leafy climbing-plants, the bignonia, with their bell-shaped flowers, and the odoriferous aristolochias.

Once more she placed herself at the post of observation, looking along the street. She scrutinized each passenger that passed under the arcade of the China trees, endeavoring to identify a certain form and set of features. Only those of masculine gender were submitted to this scrutiny. To the women that went past, white or black, she scarce gave a glance. The men alone had any interest for her, and of them only one—Louis Dupre. So thought she, as, in the shadowy veranda, she stood awaiting him, thinking of no one else.

She was mistaken. Just at that moment, some one else came in sight—one in whom she had an interest, or rather whom she had a fear—something more, a feeling of repulsion. It was a man of colossal size who was seen silently trading along the trottoir, under the shadow of the trees. He stopped in front of the hotel, opposite the veranda, and stood gazing upon her, as she looked through the lattice. Even about his form there was something forbidding, an expression of slouching brutality. This was nothing, compared with the sinister cast pervading his face and features, seen under the light of the lamp that flared above the entrance-door of the hotel.

Jessie Armstrong, recognizing the face, did not say a word to scrutinize it. The recognition caused her to tremble, and quickly gliding back, beyond eye-shot from the street, she placed herself by the side of her sister.

"What's the matter, Jess?" asked Helen, observing her frayed aspect, and in turn becoming the comforter. "You've seen something to vex you? Something of—Louis?"

"No, no, Helen! Not him."

"Not him! Some one, then? Who?"

"Oh, sister!" responded Jess, "it is a man fearful to look at. A great big fellow with features that would frighten any one. I've met him several times when I've been out walking alone. Every time I see him it sends a shiver through me; I can not tell why."

"Has he been rude to you?"

"Not exactly rude, but certainly something like it. I might say, impertinent. He stares at me in a strange way from under a broad-brimmed hat, pulled low over his eyes. And such eyes! They look hollow and horrid, like those of an alligator. I saw them just now, as he was passing, and stopped under the lamp-light. I believe he's standing there still."

"Let me have a look at his alligator eyes. Perhaps I can give them such a glance, in return, as will make the fellow better keep his distance."

The fearless elder sister, more defiant through her very sadness, stepped forward to the veranda railing, and, leaning over it, looked down into the street.

She saw people passing, several men, but none that would answer to the description given by her sister.

One, however, came past whose gait first, and then his figure, and after that his face, attracted her attention—attracted and strongly arrested it.

He too, stopped in front of the hotel. Foolishly, if he had any occasion for it, he was looking at her; since, in the position he had assumed, the lamplight fell full upon it. Well might he have wished it otherwise; for, in the countenance so exposed, Helen Armstrong identified features that exposed their owner to danger, while causing dread to herself.

She stood as if overpowered, fascinated by the sight. It was a strong emotion that thus held her transfixed.

And only for an instant. Then, recovering herself, she retreated backward, intending to take counsel with her sister.

Jessie was no longer there. Her lover had meanwhile entered the hotel, and had silently glided from the veranda to receive him.

In his shadow Helen was alone, appalled by the loneliness, her heart beating audibly within her breast. And for some time she stood thus—despite her boasted courage, trembling; for she, too, had been frayed by a specter in the street.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 97.)

**The Red Mazeppa:**  
OR,  
**THE MADMAN OF THE PLAINS.**  
A STRANGE STORY OF THE TEXAN FRONTIER.  
(THE RIGHT OF ROMANTIZATION RESERVED.)

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.  
AUTHOR OF "CROCKETT'S KIT," "WOLF, DEERMAN," "AGE OF SPADMS," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," ETC.

**CHAPTER XI.**  
**THE LEADEN CASKET.**

Down the street with a sturdy step strode the "Panther," a smile played around his thin lips, and an evil light shone from his dark eyes.

"By the head of my great-grandfather, Bandera shall bend unto my will or I'll strip the estates from him and from his beggarly line," he muttered. "First the papers and then the heir; first the mine, then the train of powder, and after that, the match which brings destruction. Bandera is not a man to be frightened by a word. I played boldly but he plays a bold game also. It is diamond cut diamond here. He guesses that I speak the truth when I proclaim that the heir to the estate lives, his face showed that plainly; but he doubts that I have that heir, doubts too, if I can prove the identity of the child. He sees clearly; a hundred chances against me to one that I succeed, yet I'll stake my life that I fail not."

The confident smile upon the face of the adventurer fully showed that his heart was in his work.

"Now for my ancient friend, Diego, the host of the drinking-shop. I wonder if he will remember me after all these years?"

The "Panther" took his way down the road that led into the town. A half-mile or so and he came to an adobe hut, half hid by the green vines that clustered around the yellowish walls. A rude sign bore the legend:

"DIEGO, WINE-SHOP."

The eyes of the adventurer brightened as he noted the sign.

"In the old place," he muttered, "now if he is still in the land of the living I shall soon know what I wish to learn."

Lope entered the wine-shop and sat down at one of the little tables.

A poor girl, brown as a nut, and with the great dark eyes so common to the captive Indian race, soon appeared and inquired

what she could have the pleasure of serving the stranger with.

"First your master," the Panther replied; "is the worthy host at home?"

"Yes, señor," answered the girl.

"Tell him that a gentleman desires to see him, pretty one," the adventurer said, gallantly.

The girl blushed under the flashing eyes of the swarthy stranger and withdrew.

"Good!" cried Lope, rubbing his hands in glee. "Diego, the first link in the chain; through him the papers, through the papers the person of this glorious Mexican beauty, Giralda. She is worth the winning. A man might well go through fire to win a maid such as she. I little thought, years ago, when I galloped over the prairie with her—a child—in my arms, that I should ever seek to win her for my own. Fortune plays strange tricks sometimes. The herdsman has changed somewhat in ten years. How often have I cursed the unlucky chance that forced me to fly from the neighborhood of Dhanis, thinking that the odds were against my ever being able to use the secret which fortune gave into my hands; but now, after ten years, I return and the trail is as fresh as though it was but yesterday I followed on it. I must surely be one of the devil's chosen ones." And the Panther laughed loud and long at the conceit.

The entrance of a thin-limbed, yellow-skinned Mexican, hardly more than a boy in years, checked the mirth of the adventurer.

The new-comer had glittering, evil-looking eyes and a face wherein craft was indelibly impressed.

"The señor wished to see me?" he said. Lope looked at him in astonishment.

"Diego, the keeper of the wine-shop—"

"Exactly, I am he," the young man cried.

"By the Virgin! you have grown young then in the last ten years!" Lope exclaimed.

The host looked puzzled.

"Perhaps it is my father that you wished to see?" he said.

"Yes, if you are the son of the Diego who kept this shop ten years ago, it is your father that I wish."

"You can not see him, señor," the young man said, with a shake of the head and an attempt to look mournful; "he is at rest."

"Satan has got his own then!" Lope exclaimed, sarcastically.

The evil light that flamed from the eyes of the young Mexican told that he did not relish the jest of the adventurer, but he bit his lip and replied not.

"I wished to see your father on business, but perhaps you will do as well," Lope said.

"I am at your service, señor."

"Did your father die suddenly?"

"No, señor; he was ill some six weeks."

"Then he had time to make his peace with heaven, and arrange his affairs?"

The innkeeper looked astonished at the question.

"Certainly, señor," he replied.

"And the good father that attended him in his illness and smoothed his path to the other world?"

"Why do you wish to know?" Diego asked.

"Only for curiosity," the Panther replied, a baffling smile upon his lips. "Perhaps I wish to call upon him and learn all the particulars relative to the death of my old friend."

"Ah! you are the herdsman, Lope?" the young man cried, suddenly.

The adventurer in turn looked astonished.

"How did you know that?"

"You possess some secret—a secret concealed in a leaden casket; that casket you gave to my father to keep; he, dying, gave it to the priest to keep for you."

"Your information is astonishingly correct as far as I am concerned," Panther said, with a charming smile, but a look in his eyes through that contradicted the smile upon his lips.

"You are the herdsman, Lope, who, ten years ago, struck a man dead in this very room and was compelled to fly for his life?"

Then with a rapid movement the Mexican placed himself between the adventurer and the door.

Lope never moved, but regarded Diego with a quiet smile.

"Your life is forfeit to the law, murderer!" Diego cried.

"Really you chill my blood," Lope observed, and he caressingly pulled the ends of his long mustache as he spoke. "Will you have the kindness to get me a glass of wine, for your terrible words have quite unnerved me?"

Diego looked at the adventurer in astonishment. He had expected supplication for mercy.

"You do not fear?" he exclaimed.

"What should I fear?" Lope asked, calmly.

"That I may denounce you to the authorities."

"Yes, but you won't do that."

"Why not?"

"My young friend, I haven't lived in the world these forty years for nothing. You will not attempt to denounce me because you have only uttered these threats to frighten me. You think that this leaden casket is worth something to some one. You want a share in it. First you get a hold on me, then you will offer to be silent if I will pay for that silence by letting you share in my secret."

Diego looked dumbfounded. The Panther's guess was right.

"Well, suppose it is as you say, that does not alter our positions in the least," the Mexican cried, doggedly. "You are in my power. Give me a share in the secret of this leaden casket or I will speak."

"Again I say you will not," the adventurer said, blandly, not a trace of excitement in his voice and manner. "And there are two reasons why you will not speak. The first is, that at the slightest sign of treachery, I'd send you after your father to the devil. And the second, thanks to our gracious President, Santa Anna, I have been granted a full pardon for all lawless acts done in the wild heat of youth."

The innkeeper looked stupefied.

"And now, then, the name of the priest who holds the casket which contains only the title deeds to my estates, for I come of good blood, gentle Diego, though you may doubt it."

"Father Philip, the Mission priest," muttered the Mexican, sullenly.

"Thanks, and now stand from the door that I may pass."

Diego obeyed, and the Panther left the inn, a contemptuous smile on his dark face.

"He lies!" muttered the Mexican, fiercely. "Who knows what that casket contains? Perhaps the clue to some Indian gold mine, hid in the mountains. I have it! I'll to Ponce de Bandera and tell him all."

Had the Panther known of the purpose of the Mexican he would not have smiled so cheerfully as he walked along.

**CHAPTER XII.**  
**WOODED, BUT NOT WON.**

A young Mexican, a dashing, handsome fellow, dressed richly and glittering with golden ornaments, rode rapidly along the road leading from the town of Dhanis to the hacienda of Bandera.

He passed the "Panther" just after the adventurer quitted the drinking-shop.

The two men hardly glanced at each other. The rider was busy with thoughts of an interview to come; the other, with remembrances of one that was past.

These two men, apparently so widely separated, had yet an object in common; and that object, the lovely Mexican girl, Giralda.

The rider was Ferdinand Tordilla, the only son of one of the oldest and wealthiest families in all Mexico; the possessor of an almost unbounded fortune. Young, handsome, skilled in all the manly exercises common to the frontier; rich in worldly goods, the gifts of fortune seemed showered upon him with a liberal hand, and yet he was not happy, for the heiress of Bandera smiled not upon him.

Little guessed the young Mexican as he rode by the swarthy stranger, whom he scarcely honored with a glance, that he passed a rival who would move both heaven and earth to win the peerless Mexican beauty.

So blindly walk we on in this world.

Tordilla drew rein at the Bandera mansion and dismounted.

On the threshold he was greeted by Ponce de Bandera in person.

"Welcome," said the father, advancing with outstretched hand.

"Well?" questioned the young man, anxiously, as he grasped the other by the hand.

"I fear that it is not well," Bandera replied, slowly.

"You have spoken to her, then?"

"Yes."

"And her answer?"

"She does not love."

A moment Tordilla was silent, his eyes bent on the ground; then suddenly he spoke.

"Let me see her, señor; let me urge my suit in person. I shall not be satisfied until I hear her say 'no' with her own lips."

"And then?" There was a meaning smile on Bandera's stern face as he put the question.

"Even then I shall not despair; I have not lived long in the world, but yet long enough to know that a woman's mind is sometimes like the wind, changeable. I shall never despair until I see her at the altar a wedded wife."

"Right; it is a poor heart that dares not try to win. See her, urge your suit, and if she say no, come to me; then we will consult together what to do, for there is no man in Mexico whom I would rather call son-in-law than you."

A silent pressure of the hand spoke Tordilla's thanks.

"Enter, and I will send Giralda to you."

The two entered the hacienda.

Leaving the young man in the grand chamber, the father sought his daughter. Brief was his speech.

"Ferdinand wishes to see you, Giralda."

The face of the girl betrayed no emotion at the announcement.

"I will go to him," she said, and with the word left the room.

Bandera's face grew dark.

"She is iron!" he muttered, "too like myself to yield a particle. She goes freely to tell him that she does not love him. What chance is there to bend her to my will?"

Thoughtfully the Mexican stroked his chin, his mind busy in reflection.

"Her brother—she loves him; loves him better than she does any thing else in the world, reckless vagabond though he be. Through him, I may work on her. I forgot! the American claims the first place in her heart. Two strings instead of one; once my hand grips them, I'll wring her heart until she yields. I have lived too long to be baffled by the whims of a foolish girl. Danger lurks in the air around me; I walk among pitfalls. This adventurer means mischief. I doubt his power, for I think him but a bragging knave, but where there is smoke, there is sometimes fire. I parried the blow though before it was struck; that sounds like a contradiction, but it is a truth. I'll wait for Tordilla at the door. If I guess right the interview will not be a very long one."

Bandera proceeded to the portal and there waited for Tordilla's coming.

When Giralda entered the room where the young Mexican was seated, he sprang to his feet and advanced to greet her with a smiling face.

With a calm and smiling look Giralda returned his salutation.

"Señorita, may I speak frankly?" Tordilla said, lower-like, eager to know his fate.

"Do you not always speak so?" Giralda replied, her face as calm and her smile as soft as ever, yet she knew full well the import of the coming speech.

"Giralda, we have known each other since childhood; I have watched you grow from a child into a blooming woman. And in the years that have passed I have learned to love you. My position, Giralda, is of course well known to you; I am one of the largest landholders and richest men in all Mexico. My wife will not want for any thing that gold can purchase. All that I have shall be yours. I do not say this to influence your answer, for I am sure that a love as priceless as yours can not be bought with gold. When it is given, it will be given as freely as heaven gives the winds to the flowers. Giralda, may I not hope some day to call you mine?"

With downcast eyes the maiden listened to the impassioned speech. At length she raised her head and slowly made reply.

"Señor, to say that I am grateful for your offer would be but to speak the truth, but truth also compels me to utter painful words, perhaps, to you. I can not accept the love you offer. My ears hear your words, but my heart does not respond. You will pardon me, but in this matter I must speak frankly."

"You feel that you do not love me, then?" Tordilla asked, his face sad and a mournful tone in his voice.

"Yes," Giralda replied, softly but firmly.

"I will not attempt to conceal from you that I have guessed from your manner that I had inspired you with a passion stronger than friendship, and I have striven by my

conduct toward you, to let you see that I regarded you as a friend only."

"But this decision is not final; you may learn to love me yet?" Ferdinand exclaimed, eagerly.

"No, no! you must not think that way," Giralda said quickly. "I am sure that I shall never think of you but as a friend."

"While I live, I can not help hoping," the young man replied, firmly.

"You wrong yourself, you wrong me by so doing. I am sure that I know my own mind, and I say that it can not be." The girl was embarrassed by the persistence of her suitor.

"When I see you married to another, then, and not till then, shall I despair," Tordilla answered.

"Señor, since I can not say aught else but what I have said, will you permit me to retire?" Giralda asked, coldly.

"Certainly; I would not restrain you even with a thought. I fear that you are offended, but I have spoken only the truth. I shall not cease to hope while a hope remains."

Silently Giralda left the apartment; her cold salutation would have chilled any heart but a lover's.

Snatching his hat from the table whither he had cast it, the young man left the room.

At the gateway leading to the road he met Bandera.

A single glance the old man cast into the face of the young one, but in that glance he read the truth.

"You have offered your love and been refused?" the father said.

"Yes," Tordilla answered, half in sorrow, half in anger.

"I expected as much—indeed, I felt sure of it. Can you guess why you were refused?"

"I have not thought of that. I have comprehended the result, not guessed at the cause."

"My daughter does not love you because she loves some one else."

The young man ground his teeth together, and an angry frown gathered upon his face.

"Good!" cried Bandera, as he noted the effect of his words. "That is the way you should look, for now you must think of vengeance."

"Vengeance!"

"Yes, upon the man who has robbed you of the treasure you seek—Giralda's love."

"And the man?"

"Can you not guess? Have you been blind?" cried the father, impatiently.

"What man was it that danced with my daughter so constantly at the last fandango?"

"The North American—Gilbert, the Mustangero!" Tordilla exclaimed.

"Right; he is your rival—a favored one, too. When the rock bars the passage of the mountain-torrent on its way to its grave, the ocean, the angry waters gather in their strength and sweep it aside."

"I understand; the Mustangero must depart!"

"Yes, if he go not of his own free will, he must be made to go," Bandera said, meaningly.

"Even now he is on a mission of danger. I have wagered with him that he can not insure the wild horse whom the prairie men call 'The Lightning.'"

"But if he succeeds and returns, you will need aid. Walk with me a hundred yards, or so, and I will explain."

The two proceeded through the archway.

**CHAPTER XIII.**  
**THE MYSTIC LIGHT.**

Like two serpents entwined around each other, the Mustangero and the Comanche chief contended for the mastery. To and fro over the prairie they struggled, locked together as with iron bands.

The savage essayed to draw the Mustangero toward his band, while he, on the contrary, did his utmost to break the grip of steel with which the Comanche held him.

Crockett, the rifle to his shoulder, and his keen eye glancing along the brown barrel, groaned in anguish.

So quickly and irregularly did the two change places in their terrible struggle, that the hunter did not dare to fire at the Indian for fear of injuring his friend.

"Oh! give him the Kentucky hug—twist his heels off the air and plug his head into it clean up to his shoulders, the derved brute!" cried the hunter.

On their part, the Indians did not dare to advance to the assistance of their chief, for fear of coming within range of the long rifles whose deadly power they had so recently witnessed; so, like statues, they sat upon their ponies, and with breathless eagerness watched the thrilling struggle.

Breast against breast, muscle against muscle, strained together in tight embrace.

Every wily trick of the wrestler's art common on the border, the Mustangero tried, but the savage chief was as supple as an eel and as strong as a panther.

Three times the Mustangero got the "crook" upon the savage, and three times the wiry Indian slipped from the dangerous embrace.

In a bear-like hug the savage strove to crush the life out of the white. He clung to him as the serpent in the Indian forest winds around his prey.

So desperate was the struggle that the grass and flowers within the little circle where the struggling men swayed over the prairie were crushed and trampled as though a mighty buffalo had laid down therein.

The Mustangero, iron-muscled though he was, felt that the Indian was fully his equal, if not his master. Vainly he tried to cast the chief from him; the Indian's grip was willow and steel combined.

The breath of the Mustangero was coming thick and hard; the savage, too, was breathing heavily, but fresher than the white.

A last desperate effort the Mustangero made. With a sudden twist he threw himself over backward to the earth, bearing the Indian with him, unable to resist and not guessing the trick; but before they reached the earth, with another twist, the white turned the Indian under and bore him to the ground, lending his own weight to increase the violence of the fall. The head of the Comanche struck the earth with a fearful shock. For a moment the concussion stunned him, and he released his grip.

The Mustangero took advantage of this to free himself from the clutch of the Indian. He leaped to his feet and ran back to the clump of timber.

For a moment the Comanche chief lay motionless, then he rose slowly to his feet,

his breast heaving with passion, and his eyes glaring with rage.

He ground his teeth together in anger as he looked toward the little clump of timber from where the brown rifle-barrels were gleaming, and then he turned slowly upon his heel and walked back to where his braves were scattered over the prairie.

"Why didn't you wipe out the heathen serpent?" cried Crockett, as Gilbert, breathless, sunk within the cover of the timber.

"You forget, I am weaponless," the Mustangero replied slowly, recovering his wind.

"I'd a' grinded him to death, the mud-colored son of a per-ahra snake!" cried Crockett, in indignation. "I kinder suspected a trick when the heathen come on. You ought to have let me plugged him once; he wouldn't have been of any use in this world



## "MY BOYS."

BY ST. ELMO.

Within a cottage quaint and old,  
That stood upon the barren soil,  
Half-buried 'mid the wild rose vines,  
Through which the sunbeams softly shone,  
A mother knelt with tearful eyes,  
Before a picture she did prize.  
Three little heads with curly hair,  
And faces flushed with beauty rare,  
With dimpled cheeks and smiling eyes,  
Where the wild spirit of mischief lies,  
This was the picture that she gazed,  
The heart's sweetest treasure, ere it faded,  
And left her in a deep despair,  
Too holy for the world's cold care.  
Two words that spoke of hope and joys,  
Were just beneath the plate, "My Boys."  
Their life was like some brilliant star,  
That rose above the azure bar,  
Growing far brighter every day,  
Then fading with a rush away,  
Leaving behind a trail of fire,  
Whose scintillations soon expire.  
One sleeps beneath the dark-blue wave,  
Where mermaids fair their tresses lave;  
Upon the green and slaty rocks,  
His shadow was mistaken for a log.  
A torn and ocean-angry roar,  
His shout was mistaken for a roar.  
The youngest sleeps beside a lake,  
Where oft upon the air doth break  
The Indian's yell and fierce war-cry,  
Waking the zephyr's gentle sigh:  
"Was he who wooed and won the queen,  
The enchanting sylvan youth,  
But her red hair in tangled wreath,  
Removed him from his rival's path.  
Heart-broken at her lover's fate,  
Her young life now was desolate;  
And she, before the Moon of Flowers,  
Was also laid 'neath slumber's bowers.  
No wonder that that mother wept,  
That scolding tear-drops slowly crept  
Adown her cheeks; that wild despair  
Made havoc 'mid her dark-gray hair.  
For those three bright faces, as of yore,  
She often knelt beside their bed,  
And when their evening prayer was said,  
She fondly kissed each darling's brow,  
That ne'er would know carresses now.

The twilight shadows softly fell,  
Athwart the plain in purple shewers,  
And borne upon the wind's soft swell,  
Was perfume from a thousand flowers:  
And she the vision of the past,  
Was slowly vanishing from sight,  
And round that mother's soul was cast,  
A holy spell of heavenly light.

The Dark Secret:  
The Mystery of Fontelle Hall.

BY COUSIN MAY CARLETON.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

AN OLD FOE.

"Who comes from the bridal chamber?"  
"This Angel, the angel of death," SHALARA.

It was a happy scene on which the glad sunshine streamed the next morning, as it came in long, slanting beams between the folds of the damask curtains, and irradiated the beaming faces on which it fell.

They were in Jacquetta's parlor at the hotel—Mr. De Vere, Augusta, Orrie and Disbrowe. Jacquetta, herself, sitting in a morning-dress of blue-silk, sat on a low ottoman at Mr. De Vere's side, one hand clasped in his, the other arm encircling Orrie. It seemed like old times to be all together again, and the sad, lonely years that had intervened since they parted last, were like a dark, vague dream. Jacquetta sat, bright, radiant, entrancing as a little sunbeam; her riquant little face flushed, parking with her new-found happiness. Mr. De Vere's face wore a look of quiet delight, tinged with a sort of chronic remorse for the past; and little Orrie stood gazing on her new-found mamma, with a mingled expression of pleasure and doubt. Even Augusta's sad, wan face was lit up with a faint glow of pleasure, and her large, melancholy dark eyes lingered long and fondly on the bright face of her long-lost sister.

But Disbrowe—who shall paint the state of beatitude he was in—the profound joy, too deep and intense for words? Ah! cynics may scoff; but, after all, the brightest moment of our life is when we know we love and are loved again. It brings the most perfect joy this world has to give. I don't say it will last; and you know the pithy Scotch proverb: "A kiss and a drink of water make but a poor breakfast"; but, after all, the kiss is very delicious for the time being; and though one would not live on sweets always, they are very delightful things, indeed, in their way, and much more pleasant at the moment than the hard brown bread of every-day life. So Lord Earncliffe—poor, faithful fellow—felt repaid a thousand fold for all he had endured and suffered for her sake; and as the heart best knoweth its own bitterness, he had suffered, too. To think that she was his last, his own—this fierce, timeless spirit, half-mortal, half-changing, but wholly bewitching—to think that he was to place a coronet on that graceful head—to call her wife, to—oh! it was too much bliss! and it would have required an iceberg, applied to either temple to cool the fever in his blood at the thought.

"Strange, strange—most strange!" murmured Mr. De Vere, as he listened to Jacquetta repeating the story Disbrowe had told him the night before. Oh, Jacquetta! what an escape you have had. What an awful fate might have been yours—to be buried alive, the most dreadful of all dooms! What a debt of gratitude we all owe to Captain Tempest at last!

"He was very kind to me; and I owe him more than I can ever repay; but to live on wealth obtained as his had been, I could not; and so we parted."

"I wonder he let you go," said Mr. De Vere. "He seemed bent on obtaining you that day—that terrible day. I will never forget."

"Do not think of it, sir. No; strange to say, he made no objection to my resolution. I believe he loved me in a sort of a way—that is, he did not care two pins for Jacquetta De Vere; but he still fondly cherished the memory of his lost Lelia. And seeing how desperately in earnest I was, he did not oppose me. And so we parted in Havre: he to go to Cuba, and I to go to Paris, under the name of Madame Lelia, and make my first appearance on the stage."

"What a strange life yours has been, Jacquetta!—a real romance in real life. What a brave, strong heart you must have, my dear child, to endure so much and make no sign! And all through me! Oh, Jacquetta, how do you ever forgive me?"

"Very easily, sir. You do not think me such a vindictive little monster, I hope?"

"But you have been so cruelly wronged; so deeply injured—deprived of a name, of a home, of friends, of a child, of a father, all in one day. Oh, Jacquetta! you may forgive me; but I can never forgive myself."

"Dear papa," she said, calling him for the first time by the old familiar name, "why will you rake over the ashes of a fire that

went out long ago. Let the dead past bury its dead, and remember nothing but that I am the happiest woman in all England to-day."

She looked at Disbrowe with a smile; and her bright eyes were full of love and trust.

"After a storm there came a calm, and after tears and weeping He poured in joyfulness!" murmured Mr. De Vere. "Heaven be praised for that! And now, Jacquetta, will you ever go back to America?"

She laughed a little, glad laugh.

"You forget Jacquetta is not to be her own mistress much longer—more's the pity. You must consult my future lord and master about that, as I will have to bow to his superior judgment, I suppose."

"Your future lord and master is ready to obey his liege lady's slightest wish. Do what you like, go where you like, and you will please me—even should it be to the remotest corner of Kamtschatka!"

"How charming! What a model husband you will make, my lord! What do you want you are not ready to give me a good shaking before a month, now?"

"It would not be the first time I have felt like it, you little torment! Nevertheless, we will go back to America whenever you please, and buy the whole State of New Jersey for a country seat, if you say so."

"Thank you! How very generous you are! Dear—dear old Fontelle—how glad I shall be to see it again! Won't you, Orrie?"

"Y-e-s," said Orrie, meditatively. "I guess so, if grandpa don't send me back to school. I'd a great deal rather go with Frank and be a middy."

"Poor—dear Frank!" laughed Jacquetta. "He was such a staunch friend and admirer of mine always. I wish you had brought him with you to England, papa."

"I couldn't, my dear. You will see him, though, when Alfred takes you back. And, a propos, when are you to be transformed into Lady Earncliffe, Jack?"

Jacquetta blushed, but before she could speak, Disbrowe began, beseechingly:

"Do intercede for me, sir!—where is the use of waiting? I have been urging her to name some day next week, but she is not to be persuaded. If you will only try your influence, you may prevail on her. Augusta—Orrie—do persuade her to listen to reason."

"Reason! Now, my lord, I think it is most unreasonable—next month will be quite time enough."

Disbrowe's gesture of despair at such an announcement made Mr. De Vere smile; and, turning to the willful beauty, he began, coaxingly:

"Nonsense, Jacquetta!—don't be absurd! I can't see why you should object to next week, if the settlements can be got ready in that time—eh, Earncliffe?"

"Of course not, sir! There is no possible reason why she should do so; and, as for the settlements, I'll pledge you my word they will be all right. Come, Jacquetta, do consent and make me happy at once."

"Happy! He calls that happiness!" said Jacquetta, sotto voce. "Why, papa, such haste is perfectly barbarous!—no one ever heard of such a thing! Why, when a man is going to be married, they give him three or four weeks to prepare; and I don't see why you should be less merciful than the grim old judge!"

"Now, Miss Jack—I mean mamma—don't," said Orrie, looking sympathizingly at Disbrowe. "Don't you see you are making him feel bad? Why can't you do what he wants—I'm sure I would."

"Bravo, Orrie!" said Mr. De Vere, laughing. "Would you, really, Orrie?" said Jacquetta. "Will you come and live with us if I do?"

"I guess I will," said Orrie, with sparkling eyes, "if grandpa lets me! May I, grandpa?"

"Decidedly, my dear! Come, prevail on mamma to name some day next week!"

"Now, mamma, do—why can't you? Just see how solemn he looks. I'm sure he would do as much for you, if you asked him. Aunt 'Gusty, coax mamma!"

"My dear Jacquetta, let me prevail on you to make Alfred happy," said Augusta, with one of her faint, cold smiles. "Life is too short to be spent in waiting."

"Oh, Jacquetta! be reasonable!—do, for once in your life! Let it be next Thursday," pleaded Disbrowe.

Jacquetta laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, be it so—a willful man must have his way; but if you repent before the honeymoon is over, don't say it was my fault."

"Repent! Ah, my darling! you know I will never do that!"

"Indeed, I don't! Think of Socrates! How do you know but I will turn out a second Xantippe on your hands? I consent, but on one condition."

"What is that? Name it, and it shall be fulfilled, though it were half my kingdom."

"Ah! that sounds very fine; but I know the proverb: 'Good promises are bad performers.' However, we will see. Our marriage must be strictly private. I will have no pomp, or fuss, or parade. If I am to be a countess, I will put off my greatness as long as possible. And, secondly, instead of going to the continent after the ceremony, you will take me to America. I want to see the land of my birth and the home of my childhood once more."

"It shall be done on the honor of an earl. Have you any further commands for your slave?"

"No—yes; I want to see Norma—I mean Lady Austrey this morning. So, though it is yet unfashionably early, I will take the privilege of a friend, and dress immediately for the visit."

"By the way, Jacquetta," said Disbrowe, as she arose to go, "when am I to learn the mystery of this strange intimacy between you and Norma? Austrey told me his wife fainted, or something, the moment she saw you."

"My dear sir, is it such a very unusual thing for a lady to faint suddenly? That I am to be brought to task for it? Lady Austrey might faint a thousand times, and Jacquetta have nothing to do with it."

"True! But when Lady Austrey immediately gets into a state of mind, and insists on seeing Jacquetta, surely that lady has something to do with it, then."

"Ah! you are dying to know, I see; but I shan't tell you—at least till Norma gives me leave. So, for ten minutes, adieu!"

And the bright little vision was gone.

Half an hour later, the whole party drew up before the stately portal of Tremain House, and were ushered into the drawing-room, where they found Norma alone.

"My dearest Norma!"

"My dear—dear Jacquetta!" And the two friends were clasped in each other's arms.

"So, my lord, the wanderer is found," said Lady Austrey, when the first greetings were over, turning, with a smile, to Disbrowe.

"Yes; and, if I do not mistake greatly, we have to thank your ladyship for it."

She laughed.

"How is this, Madame Lelia? Have you been telling?"

"Not I—though it was not for want of coaxing, I can assure you."

"No; we have been lavishing entreaties on her which, if she had not a heart as hard as the nether millstone, she could not resist. Will Lady Austrey be more merciful, and explain the mystery?"

She blushed and looked at Jacquetta.

"Shall I tell him?"

"Just as you like. He will die of a rush of curiosity to the brain, if you don't."

As she spoke the door opened, and Mrs. Tremain and her daughter entered. Cordial greetings were interchanged; and, finding the rest were in the midst of an animated conversation, Norma beckoned to Disbrowe and made room for him beside her.

"So you would like to know how Jacquetta and I came to know each other?"

"Really I must plead guilty, I fear. You knew her before you met in Italy?"

"Yes—let me see—nearly a year before."

"Why—how?"

"Well, you needn't exclaim in that way, and draw attention—it is simple enough when you come to understand it."

"But, my dear madam, a year before, she was in America."

"I know it! So was I!"

"Why, how thunderstruck you look! Is my visiting that country as well as other people, such an unheard-of thing?"

"But really—why, my dear Norma, I never heard you were there," he cried, completely astounded.

"Very likely—yet I was there, nevertheless. How is Captain Tempest, and my friend, Grizzle Howlet, and Mr. Rowlie, of the Mermaid Inn?"

She half-laughed, yet there was an unusual flush on her pale face. Disbrowe sat mute with amazement.

"Dumb, I see! By the way, my lord, have you heard of your Spanish friend, Jacquetta lately?"

"A light broke upon him! With a half-repressed cry he nearly sprung from his seat."

"Good heavens! were you—could you—? Oh, Norma, was it you?"

She was crimson to the temples, yet she met his startled eyes firmly, and said, "Yes!"

"And I never knew it!—never suspected it. Norma—Norma! what an idiot I have been!"

"Hard words, my lord; but, of course, you know best."

"And you were—you followed me there! Did Jacquetta know it, Norma?"

"Yes; her keen eyes discovered me at once; and I told her all. Do you understand now, the scene in my room?"

"Oh! everything is as clear as day now! Good Heaven! how I should have been so blind! Does your father know, Norma?"

"No; no one knows but you and Jacquetta; I ought to have told George, I suppose; but really I felt ashamed to tell him I had made such a fool of myself. Where ignorance is bliss, you know, 'tis folly to be wise. Perhaps, also, you understand the mystery of the painting now, too?"

"Oh, every thing is as clear as noonday; but this is so strange I can scarcely believe it is dreaming."

"Think it a dream, if you like. I wish it was. But, my lord, don't flatter yourself too much. You know how intensely romantic I always was, and it was quite as much for the sake of the adventure, as for the sake of Captain Disbrowe, that I went. It had haunted my imagination for years, an escape like that; and when the opportunity offered, I seized it. Papa was abroad on the continent, and would not return until you did; so it was easy enough feigning a trip to Scotland, and going to America instead. You remember my disguise, my dyed hair, and walnut-barked complexion, and how completely it changed me, when you failed to recognize me? A Southampton, I think it was—I first met Captain Tempest, and finding he was to sail the next day, took passage with him to America. A few days after my arrival, we met; Jacquetta discovered my secret; I told her my history; and though she blamed me for my wild freak, yet she consented to keep my secret. And so—*finis*!"

He smiled, and looked at her with a strange glance. She met it with one half-scornful, half-shy.

"No, my lord; have no doubts on the subject. I have completely got over my school-girl penchant for the dashing guardsman. I love my husband with my whole heart, and him alone. When am I to congratulate my dear life, my lord?"

"Next week," he answered, his eyes filling with love and pride, as they rested on Jacquetta.

"Ah, I am glad! Dear Jacquetta, how happy she will be!"

"I hope so—I trust so. If the devotion of a life can make her so, she will be indeed."

Some other visitors were announced as he spoke, and our party arose to go.

Mr. De Vere had promised to take Orrie somewhere. So they set off on foot, while Augusta and Jacquetta entered the earl's brougham to be driven home. As they drove on, laughing and chatting gayly, their attention was attracted by a mob that had gathered round a drunken woman in the street. A sudden cheer arose, as they approached; and the horses, only alarmed things at best, saw fit to take fright; and the instant after, were dashing along like mad. Disbrowe strove to check their mad career, but in vain; and they flew like lightning on in the direction of Westminster Bridge, threatening every moment to dash the carriage to pieces. People cleared the road in terror, and let them dash on to certain destruction—without making any attempt to stop them. Augusta lay in a dead swoon, and Jacquetta sat white as marble, perfectly still.

They were on the bridge; and the passengers shrunk to either side, in dismay, when, suddenly, a man, whose eagle eye caught sight of the faces within, uttered a wild shout, and springing forward, heedless of danger, seized the nearest horse by the bridle, and in spite of their mad plunging and rearing, held him a grasp of iron for a moment. The next cry of horror broke from the crowd; he was down, trampled under the feet of the furious animals,

but a dozen hands now held them fast; and, the next moment, Disbrowe was out of the carriage, forcing his way through the crowd to where the wounded man lay. Crushed, trampled, bleeding, a fearful spectacle, he lay there, with the pitying crowd bending over him.

"Is he dead?" cried Disbrowe, kneeling beside the bleeding form.

"No, my lord," said the man he addressed, trembling, his cap. "Not dead yet, but soon will be. Skull fractured, I think."

"He must be removed instantly," said Disbrowe, starting up. "Do any of you know him?"

"No; no one did. He was a sailor, they thought, and, very likely, a stranger."

Even as he spoke, the wounded man's eyes opened, and fixed themselves on Disbrowe.

"Lelia—Lelia! Where is Lelia?" he cried.

"That voice! It reached Jacquetta where she sat; and, the next moment, with a startled cry of grief and horror, she was bending over him.

"Oh, Alfred! Oh, Heaven! it is my father!"

"I'm done for, Lelia! It's all up with old Nick Tempest, at last," he said, holding out his hand, with something like a smile. Jacquetta wrung her hands.

"Oh, Alfred, can nothing be done? Must he die here—in this dreadful place?"

"Heaven forbid! Here, my men, bring a cab instantly—will you?"

As if by magic, one was found, and was beside him immediately. The wounded man was lifted in. Jacquetta, and a surgeon, who providentially happened to be among the crowd, entered after him, and drove off, while Disbrowe re-entered the brougham, where Augusta still lay insensible, and, as he drove, so the two mortal foes had met again.

(Concluded next week—commenced in No. 87.)

## Why She Married Him.

BY CROCHORE.

THOMAS CARLETON was not handsome, to be sure; his features were decidedly irregular; his nose was rated a "pug" by all the girls in the village; in fact, there was nothing prepossessing about him that could or would attract the eye of any of us girls.

It was a wonder to us all when we discovered he was married to Lucy Adams, the handsomest girl in the place; and who, report said, was engaged to Charles Valentine, who was as handsome as an Apollo.

All the spinsters and maiden aunts shook their heads, whenever they met—which was often—and vowed that she was a "heartless vixen," while we, who were young and inexperienced, thought that Lucy must either have lost her senses, or something serious must have happened for Lucy to have broken off her engagement with Charles Valentine.

We were not far from the truth. During one of my visits (I was one of her "boon companions," or I would not thus address her), I asked why she married Carleton.

She did not faint, as heroines usually do, in romance, whenever an interesting occasion occurs, but a cloud passed over her face; the tears, which she vainly strove to check, rolled down her cheeks; and with a voice, husky with emotion, she replied:

"You know, Mary, Mr. Carleton was a frequent visitor at my father's cottage. He was always polite and attentive whenever he called; he was possessed of brilliant conversational powers, which he always used to the best advantage; and for which my father liked him."

One evening, as he was leaving the cottage, I accompanied him to the door—he asked me to take care of fifty dollars for him."

I knew he frequently visited the tavern; and, glad that he was beginning to save his money, I accepted the trust.

"He gave me the money. I entered the house, and put the money in my trunk."

"Imagine my surprise when, on opening my trunk the next morning, I discovered the money was gone."

"What could I do? Where could the money have flown to? These were the questions which filled my brain."

"Thomas Carleton called the next evening. I had ransacked every thing in the house, in my vain endeavor to find the money; but with no success."

"With a throbbing heart, I entered the room where he was awaiting my presence. I was as white as a sheet, as I looked at the mirror."

"He asked for the money. I told him it could not be found. He seemed to feel for me—so I then thought—for he did not ask the question again."

"I knew in my heart, in spite of his trying to hide it, that he thought me guilty of embezzling his money."

"Under these circumstances what could I do but say yes when he asked me to marry him? To be sure, I told him of my prior engagement to Charles, but he was inexorable."

"With tears in my eyes, I bade her good-by, and returned to my home without disclosing to any one what she had told me."

Thomas Carleton's visits to the tavern, instead of decreasing, grew more and more frequent. In vain his wife tried to persuade him to discontinue them. All remonstrances were useless.

He was killed in a drunken brawl shortly afterward, and Lucy married again—this time her first love, Charles Valentine—and is known far and near for her many deeds of kindness. She is the author of the new book called "A Woman's Trials."

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## A HAPPY-TAPH.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Remaining here are the remains  
Of Sandy Steamore,  
Who lived to twice his rightful length,  
And died at thirty-four.

He was a man of many parts,  
Though little understood,  
He never did an evil thing,  
While he was doing good.

To honesty he had an eye,  
I knew him like a book,  
You could have trusted him with all,  
If you the chances took.

He said he never told a lie,  
Even from his earliest youth,  
And on his word you could depend,  
When he told the truth.

Among his friends he stood quite high—  
Some six feet when upright,  
And yet that man was very small,  
Beside his appetite.

At school he sometimes got the bay,  
But oftener the birch;  
And he was a church-going man,  
When he went to church.

He always trod the narrow path,  
And therefore oft fell over,  
But never in his life was drunk,  
As long as he was sober.

And those who view his grave may say,  
"Alas, here lies a rude one,  
Who getting off into bad things  
At last got in a good one."

## The Blacksnake Tragedy.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

A GHASTLY white face, looking upward with staring eyes, glazed and covered with an icy film; a few locks of iron-gray hair, slowly eddying back and forth, now touching the pallid cheeks, now retreating as though endowed with life; a great blotch, dark and significant, disfiguring the temple, showing plainly in the brightening dawn, telling of crime—of murder.

Such was the sight that caught the eye of a mechanic hastening along Second street to begin his day's toil. Little wonder that he uttered a cry of horror and paused, peering over the railing of the bridge spanning the sluggish waters of Blacksnake Creek.

The cry and gesture attracted the attention of another early riser, and then, from one street to another, like magic, ran the tidings, until a goodly crowd was gathered at the bridge. Among them was a tall, neatly-dressed man, who was the first to recognize the victim.

"It is old Brevard—Jacques Brevard!" The name was generally recognized, for few in St. Joseph but knew the ex-fur-trader. Those who had been most confident of long play now hesitated. They began to believe that the man's death had been caused by an accident, for Brevard was a heavy drinker, especially when at his favorite amusement—gambling.

"I suspect foul play," added the tall man, addressing a police officer, as they descended the crumbling bank. "Make a close examination and see if there has been murder committed. I will tell you my reasons afterward."

The corpse was drawn from the water and gently placed upon the shore. And then the cause of death was plain to all, as the officer bared the dead man's breast. Directly over the heart was a deep, clean cut, where the keen blade of a knife had been driven home.

"Search his pockets," coldly added the tall man, Reuben Gillespie by name. "I know that at midnight he had over two thousand dollars with him, that he won at my bank."

"There has been murder committed here," sternly uttered the officer. "You say you saw him at midnight?"

"Nearly an hour after that," quietly replied Gillespie. "He was at my rooms, playing, until after twelve. Then he left in company with" and here he bent his head, whispering—"Paul Chicot. I accuse him of the murder!"

The two men conversed apart for some moments, and then, when the coroner was announced, a warrant was sworn out for the arrest of Paul Chicot. And while these acts are going on, a glance at the persons introduced may not be amiss.

Jacques Brevard was a Frenchman, whose name was almost as well known in connection with the fur trade as those of Choteau, Ashley, McKenzie, Robidoux, etc. In the trade he amassed a princely fortune, but drinking and gambling rapidly decreased it.

His family, at the time in question, consisted only of one daughter, Marie, a maiden possessing great beauty of both mind and person. These traits, together with her father's wealth—for he was still well to do—as a matter of course, made her many warm admirers.

Only two of them, however, need we allude to now—Reuben Gillespie and Paul Chicot. Of the two, Marie fancied Paul, and soon learned to love him, though her parent advocated the cause of Gillespie.

Paul was a talented young man, who had some time previously gained admittance to the bar, but, like many others, strong drink was his bane. He was easily led astray, and then, when under the influence of liquor, he gambled heavily.

Gillespie was a professional gambler, but, as he had the reputation of "dealing on the square," his calling did not debar him from the first society. The reader will bear in mind that we write of the West, nearly two decades since.

Jacques Brevard was greatly taken by the polished gambler, and when Gillespie asked for his child's hand in marriage, he was very glad. But Marie was firm in her refusal. She loved Paul, and though Brevard forbade him the house, the lovers managed to meet frequently.

Thus matters stood upon this April day, in the year 1854.

Reuben Gillespie gave evidence before the coroner, in substance, as follows. Both Brevard and Chicot had been in his club rooms the night before, and had played heavily, though with opposite results. While Brevard won, Chicot lost every cent in his possession.

The game broke up earlier than usual, and as Gillespie, with Harry Paulding, who roomed with him, passed Second street bridge on their way home, they saw two men standing on the bridge, leaning over the parapet, and recognized them. They were the murdered man and Paul Chicot. After a brief salute, they passed on, leaving the two still standing there. And when Paulding was summoned from home, he told the same story.

The warrant had been served on Chicot. He was found at his chamber, in a drunken stupor. Blood stained his hands and shirt-



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front. Upon the floor beside him lay a bloody knife; the silver hilt bore his name. Brevard's watch was found in his pocket, together with a considerable sum of gold. When aroused, he expressed surprise at his condition, but let fall nothing incriminating himself.

The coroner's jury returned a verdict of willful murder against Paul Chicot. The young lawyer was cast into prison.

Marie Brevard sunk beneath the dread shock, and her life was despaired of. She knew not that her lover was accused of the crime, and in her delirium called piteously for him to come and cool her aching brow.

In due time the trial came off, the evidence was overwhelming, and Chicot could bring forward nothing to refute the damning testimony. Not a half-score persons in the city but believed him guilty. After the summing up of the judge, the jury returned a verdict of guilty, without leaving their seats.

Paul Chicot was condemned to suffer the extreme penalty, on the first day of May. He received the sentence in stony despair, but fainted as he was taken from the courtroom.

Marie Brevard rallied from her illness, but was sadly shattered in both body and mind. Gillespie visited her frequently, and while communicating with her, pressed his suit ardently. While Marie gave him no actual encouragement, she allowed him to infer that she would not reject his suit at the end of a suitable probation.

But, if so prosperous in this direction, Gillespie was more unfortunate in his business matters. A stranger—hailing from Texas—had become a regular habitue of the club rooms, and, venturing largely, was a heavy winner. Though fortune would occasionally favor the lover, it was only for a

time, and the stream of gold steadily flowed into the Texan's pockets.

Then another tragedy startled St. Joseph. There had been a bloody affray in the club-rooms, in which the Texan had been killed, while his antagonist lay at the point of death.

The detectives took possession of the place, and sifted the matter thoroughly. What they first gleaned was that Harry Paulding—a regular habitue of the place—had challenged the Texan to a game of poker. Paulding lost heavily, and becoming enraged, accused the other of cheating. A quick buffet was the reply, when pistols were drawn and fired. The Texan was killed, and Paulding mortally wounded.

Gillespie appeared very uneasy and solicitous regarding the wounded man's welfare; so much so that one of the detectives suspected his motives and ordered him to leave the room. His action was justified right speedily; for the gambler, finding that his sands of life were well-nigh run out, unbuckled his guilty soul.

Among other crimes, he admitted to killing Jacques Brevard. He had been hired to do this by Reuben Gillespie, partly to recover the large sum won by the ex-fur-trader, and to put his rival out of the way.

Chicot was very drunk, and was easily induced to swallow a drugged potion, after which he was conveyed to his rooms by Gillespie, while Paulding followed Brevard. After slaying and plundering the trader, he returned and left the articles where they seemed to indicate Chicot as the murderer.

This Gillespie had done, seeing how hopeless was his suit while Paul remained, as Brevard would not force his daughter's inclinations, though favoring Gillespie's suit. Paulding signed this confession before

he died, and Gillespie was arrested. But his trial never came off, for the gambler effected an escape by some means, and fled to parts unknown.

The young lawyer was freed, and deeply impressed by his narrow escape from a shameful death, pledged himself to total abstinence from drink and gambling; a pledge that to this day he has faithfully kept.

A year afterward he married Marie Brevard, and left the scene of their trials, for the East, where they still live.

Reuben Gillespie was hung by a mob, at Cheyenne, some four years ago.

## Recollections of the West.

## The Early War-path.

BY CAPT. BRUIN ADAMS.

THE axle of the mail-coach, in which I was traveling southward, had broken in ascending the long, steep grade of Muldrow's Hill, rendering it impossible to proceed further until the damage had been repaired.

Fortunately we were in close proximity to a substantial, though primitive farmhouse, and thither the two other passengers and myself briskly made our way, and asked lodging for the night.

An old, gray-headed man, shaking with palsy or weakness, greeted us cordially at the door, and we were shown into a comfortable room where blazed an immense "log heap," in the ample fire-place.

A substantial supper was soon served, after which we assembled around the hearth, each provided with a fresh "cob" pipe by



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the worthy host, which we industriously puffed during pauses in the conversation.

The latter very naturally turned upon the accident that had befallen our coach, thence branching off to the state of the roads, condition of the country and its inhabitants, etc.

I had chanced to remark that it was an exceedingly wild and unsettled section, and that I had heard some pretty hard stories about a certain class of men who, leagued together, dwelt therein, and, in plain words, robbed their neighbors and all strangers who fell in their way.

"I'm afeard you ar' right, young man," said our host. "The country is yet a wild one, and thar ar' many bad men in it, but, Lord bless you, sir, it don't compare with a time I once knowed of. I mean when the Injuns were here."

"Why, do you mean to say that you lived here when the Indians did?" asked one of my companions, a down-Easter, to whom the very mention of a red-man was repugnant.

"That I do, sir," responded the patriarch. "And, what's more, my old wife yonder was here with me, not as my wife then, you know, only a playmate, fur we were both children."

"They must have been stirring times," I remarked.

"That they were, young man, that they were. But if you like, while waiting to finish your pipe, I'll tell you how Mary, yonder, and me came to fall in love and get married."

There was a charming simplicity of conversation and manner about the old pioneer that was most refreshing. And I settled myself to listen to his story with lively anticipation.

"My father and his old friend, my wife's father, came out from Virginy together. They had foun't the world together from childhood, and determined to do so until the end came."

"Mary and I were both mere children at the time, I twelve and she two or three years younger. Well, we hadn't been here long before the Indians smelt us out, and one night a party of five Shawnees, who had wandered off down this way, came to the house and asked fur victuals and fire-water."

"The first we give 'em, but the liquor they didn't get. It was dangerous to let them have it; besides, there was but little in the house for sickness. They were powerful mad. I recollect perfectly how they looked as they went growling and grumbling away, and I overheard one of them, who was afterward found to be *sobte*, swear he would have revenge fur not getting the whisky. We did see any thing more of the red-skins for several months, but, just as winter set in, a hunter came by and said they were abroad in the ranges north of us, and were acting badly, burnin' and murderin' on every side."

"That very night we saw two or three bright lights in that direction, and knew they were our neighbors' houses on fire."

"We passed a bad night of it, you can well believe, and when morning came, we got ready, or rather my father and the hands did, to meet the Indians if they came. They didn't come, but a messenger did with the fearful intelligence that Mary's father and mother had been murdered, the house burned down, and the little girl carried off alive."

In less than two hours my father had collected half a dozen fine fellows, and started off on the Indians' trail.

By hard begging I was allowed to go along, seated behind the old man, with my rifle lying in front between us.

The ride was a hard one, but at last we sighted the savages, ascending a hill upon the opposite side of a creek that lay in front. Here the old man dropped me, bidding me *squat* behind a large rock beside the trail, and wait until the fight was over.

Now, around this rock, for a few feet, the ground was clear, but a little back of it the undergrowth grew thick and heavy. I suppose I had been seated there an hour or less, when the firing began, and I began to get restless. You see, young as I was, I wanted to take a hand in the business. I was just going to leave my stand and make for where the skirmish was going on, when I suddenly heard a rustling in the brush behind where I was squatting.

"I had been brought up to a rough and ready kind of life, and was generally up to most any thing that took place."

"I wheeled, as I heard the noise, cooking my little rifle as I did so, and bringing her up for handy shooting."

"It was a good thing that I did so."

"A little on one side of where I stood under the rock, an Indian warrior crept out of the bushes, paused a moment to glance carefully around, and then stepped back again, and again appeared, this time bearing little Mary, my wife that now ar', in his arms. Well, it like to have took my breath, but I saw through the whole thing in a minute, and determined to beat that Indian, anyhow. You see, while the others were holding my father and his friends in check, this warrior was 'doubling' on the trail, carrying the captive with him."

"The Indian paused a second time as he came from the bushes, and this time he saw me standing by the rock, and just lifting my rifle to my face."

"Red-skins are quick in their motions, and I tell you, this one came nigh being too quick for me."

"The instant he caught sight of me, he dropped the girl, and drawing his tomahawk, sprang forward for close quarters. But he never reached 'em, for although when I pulled trigger he could almost have touched the muzzle of my gun, yet he was dead before he had gotten a foot closer."

"I shot him plump center between the eyes."

"What!" I exclaimed, "and you but twelve years of age?"

"There or thereabouts! Mary!" he suddenly called, "how old was I, exactly, when I shot that Injun that had you in his arms?"

"Would have been twelve next month, Edward," answered a sweet voice, from the next room. When I went to bed that night, I could but wonder that I ever got into a country where a lad twelve years old went on the "war-path."

"WIFE was undressing little four-year-old Charley the other evening. He silently felt of his chubby arms a little while, and then looking up into his mother's face, he said: 'Mamma, who made me?'"

"The good Man up in the sky," answered mamma. Charley turned a steady, sober, searching look through the tree-tops, up into the clear, beautiful, starlit sky for a moment, and then innocently capped the climax with the important question: "But, mamma, who took me down?"